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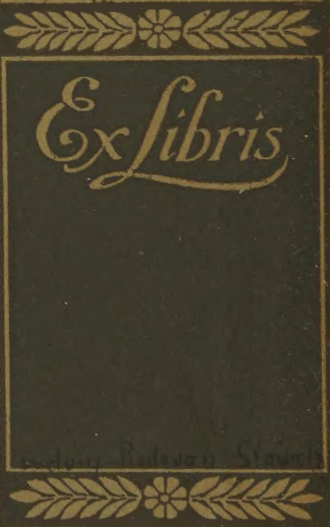

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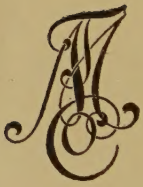

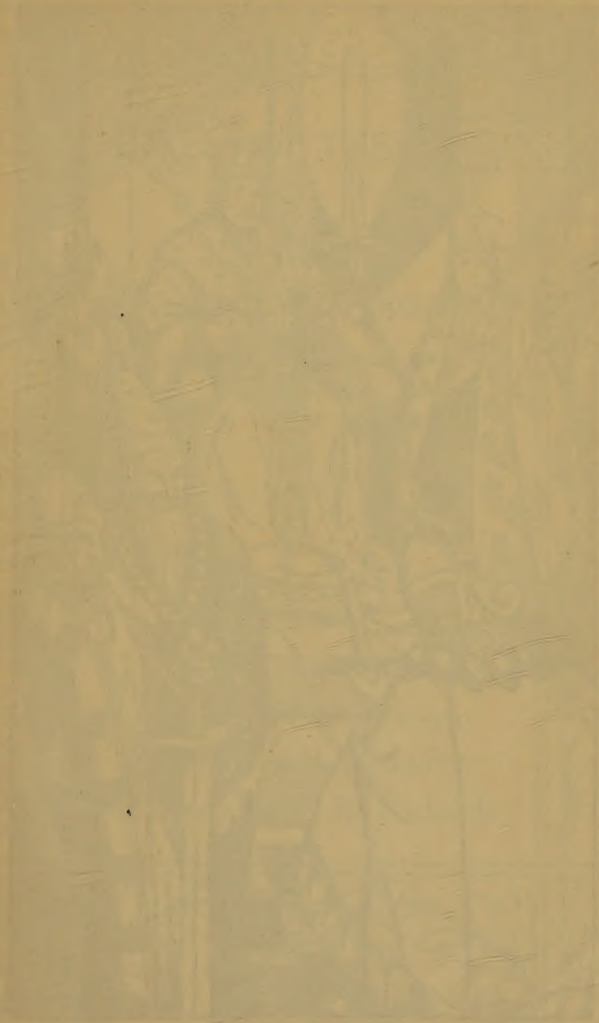

. . . three fair queens
Who stood in silence near his throne, . . .
"The Coming of Arthur."

IDYLLS OF THE KING

Alfred,
Lord Tennyson

Edited by C.W. French
Revised by H.Y. Moffett
Illustrated by G. M. Richards

The Macmillan Company

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INTRODUCTION

Alfred, Lord Tennyson

It is often the case that the life of a poet is best read in his works; for a true poet is not often a man of action, or one who throws himself, to any large extent, into the great movements of the day; consequently the facts of importance in his biography may be told in few words. The Tennyson whom the world knows and loves to-day is not the man who lived in Somersby or Farringford, but the pure sweet spirit who comes to us in the mystic beauty of "The Lady of Shalott" and "Sir Galahad," the calm faith and high philosophy of "In Memoriam," the musical harmony of many a perfect lyric, the romantic tales of the *Idylls of the King,* or the tranquil trust of "Crossing the Bar." His life had little of significant incident, yet in his great utterances he lived more truly and exerted more potent and lasting influences than many a hero whose exploits have filled chapters of the world's history.

Alfred Tennyson was born in 1809 in Somersby, in Lincolnshire, where his father was rector. In the healthful life of this beautiful country district he passed his boyhood days. He attended for four years the grammar school at Louth and in 1828

went to Trinity College, Cambridge, where he stayed three years. After this he lived at various places, supporting himself on his own small income, until 1845, when he was given a state pension. In 1850 he married Miss Emily Sellwood, to whom he had been engaged for many years, and was appointed poet laureate of England to succeed Wordsworth, who had recently died. Three years later he bought a house at Farringford, in the Isle of Wight, where he lived the most of the time until 1869, when he occupied another house at Aldworth, near Haslemere, in order to be more remote from the great crowds of visitors whom his increasing popularity attracted in large numbers to Farringford. In 1884 he was raised to the peerage under the title of Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford. He died in October, 1892, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, with great ceremonial.

In personal appearance Tennyson was a man of unusual dignity and distinction. Jowett said of him, after his death, that he was a magnificent man, who stood before you in all his native refinement and strength. He was naturally of a shrinking disposition, in spite of his splendid physique, and could seldom be persuaded to go to places where he would be brought into contact with crowds of people. Like Wordsworth, he was a devout worshipper of nature and of nature's God. He delighted in long walks in solitary places and was a close and discriminating student of

plants and birds, as well as of the various phenomena of nature. More than any other poet of recent years he went to nature for his subjects, his illustrations, and his inspiration. His works are very numerous. For fifty years his pen never wearied, and no poet has ever been accorded a more genuine and widespread appreciation. Among the great galaxy of English poets of the past two centuries, including such names as Scott, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, Byron, and Browning, he ranks very high in the breadth and quality of his work.

A complete account of the works of Tennyson, with the circumstances attendant upon their production and publication, would be too long for this sketch. Only the more important will be named.

While in Trinity College he won the Chancellor's medal by a poem called "Timbuctoo," which was published in 1829. Previously, in 1827, a book entitled *Poems by Two Brothers* had appeared, written by his brother Charles and himself. The poems in this book were without special merit, and gave little promise of the future greatness which was to be his.

In 1830 appeared his second book, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical,* and in 1832 a third, containing "The Lady of Shalott" and other poems now famous. After this he remained silent for ten years. During this time, however, he was hard at work perfecting his art by unwearying study.

Everything he wrote was rewritten, revised, mercilessly criticised, and corrected, until he had acquired a perfection and finish of technique which few poets of any age have excelled, or even equalled. It was not until he felt himself sure of the high excellence of his work that he ventured to publish another book. Consequently his next volume, published in 1842, was a masterpiece and at once leaped into an enduring popularity. It contained many poems which are now classed among his best, and from this time on he was firmly fixed in public favor. In 1847 he published *The Princess,* which contains some of the most beautiful and perfect lyrics in the English language. In 1855 *Maud* appeared, and in 1859 the first instalment of the *Idylls*. In 1864 came *Enoch Arden,* of which seventeen thousand copies were sold on the day of publication. From that time on appeared in rapid succession volume after volume, containing much that the world loves to-day and will continue to love as long as literature lasts. Beginning in 1875, he published a series of dramas, among which were *Queen Mary, Harold,* and the *Foresters*. While they contain much brilliant work, they are among the least popular of his works. The *Idylls* were published from time to time, the last, "Balin and Balan," appearing in 1885. His later work was marked by the production of the superb lyric, "Crossing the Bar," a short time before his death.

In his early days Tennyson formed an intimate

friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam, whose death in 1833 affected him profoundly and lastingly. He began at once to write a monumental elegy, which should not only express fittingly his unspeakable grief, but should also embody his philosophy of the great problems of life and death. In 1850 *In Memoriam* was published, and at once became the most widely read and most profoundly admired poem of its time in the English language.

Tennyson paid great attention to the technique of his poetry, and composed with the most painstaking care. He rewrote his poems many times, changing words and reconstructing lines, until he reached perfection of form and rhythm. He was especially careful in his choice of words, and employed many rhetorical devices to add to the beauty and effectiveness of his work. He employed all kinds of meter known to rhetoric, and originated many besides. Very many of his lyric poems may be set to music without change, for, as some one has said, "they sing themselves." While he lived aloof from the world, he kept in touch with the thought of the day, and was intensely interested in the great progressive movements which took place in the social and economic life of the time; and much of the newer thought reflected itself in his poetry. Yet his genius was distinctively mystic and romantic, and the emotional element was never lacking, even in the most didactic and philosophical of his

poetry. In all his work, whatever the subject, there is a peculiar charm which attracts many who are not otherwise lovers of poetry, and which once experienced can never be thrown off.

Tennyson early became interested in the Arthurian legends, and spent much time in reading the various versions to be found in the works of the great mediæval romancers. In 1832 he published the first of his Arthurian poems, "The Lady of Shalott," which was followed in 1842 by the other lyrics, "Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere," and "Sir Galahad." In the same volume appeared the "Morte d'Arthur," which now forms a part of the "Passing of Arthur." In 1859 he published "Enid," "Vivien," "Elaine," and "Guinevere." In 1869 appeared "The Coming of Arthur," "The Holy Grail," "Pelleas and Ettarre," and the "Passing of Arthur." In 1871 "The Last Tournament" was published, and the next year "Gareth and Lynette." In 1885 the "twelve books" were completed by the publication of "Balin and Balan." He felt that the theme of the *Idylls* was "the greatest of all poetical subjects," and no one can read them carefully without seeing that in his treatment of them he has risen to the high level of his subject.

Many lives of the poet have been written, but by far the best, and the one which, naturally, gives the most intimate and sympathetic view of his life and personality is the *Memoir of Tennyson* by his son, Hallam, who has also edited and

published his works in six volumes. These books contain many annotations and explanations from the hand of the poet himself.

THE IDYLLS OF THE KING

The *Idylls* are a group of romantic poems in blank verse, written at various times, and with several different minor heroes; but all inspired by and celebrating the personality and achievement of the mythic King Arthur. They are based on a cycle of famous mediæval romances, but are written with the evident intention of inculcating great moral and social truths, of which, in the belief of the poet, the age needs to be strongly reminded. The poet himself said of them: "The whole is the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin. Birth is a mystery and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the tableland of life and its struggles and performances. It is not the history of one man or of one generation, but of a whole cycle of generations."

Through all the *Idylls* may be traced one constantly developing theme, the ruin of a great and noble ideal by the broadening and deepening influence of a single sin, and that a sin of which the hero is himself guiltless. Through all the episodes the gathering power of evil and its blighting influence upon the whole community is clearly brought out, and the final overthrow of Arthur's great constructive scheme and of his

high ideals appears as the direct result of the sin of her who should have been his most powerful helper. The *Idylls* contain many of the elements of a great epic poem, but are lacking in that essential unity which, with the final triumph of the hero and the principles for which he contends, are the necessary elements of all great epic poems.

Yet a careful study will undoubtedly show that all the apparently disconnected episodes are contributory, directly or indirectly, to the development of the great central theme. The action is epic, in that it exemplifies the great and heroic struggle of the soul, with high purposes and ideals, against the aggressive evil of the world; and while this struggle seems to end in defeat, a final vision comes of a better world, where its defeat shall be turned into a glorious triumph, and the dying king hailed as a world-victor. The materials of which the *Idylls* were constructed were taken mainly from old romances; but the poet has brought them together with a perfect art, has colored them with the brilliant hues of his high artistic sense, and has so wrought them into new patterns and exalted themes that the resulting poem is a new creation, wholly the poet's own, and not the mere recrudescence of oft-repeated legends of the past.

During the earlier Middle Ages the pursuit of literature was confined to the bards and minstrels, who wandered through the length and breadth of the land, entertaining people by the recital of

heroic deeds, many of which they had learned from their predecessors and some of which they composed themselves. There was a tendency to group scattered romances and tales around the names of certain well-known heroes, until there were built up a number of great romantic and heroic cycles, named from the heroes whose deeds they celebrated. Thus came into existence the Gawain romances, and those which centred around Merlin, Tristram, Lancelot, and Arthur. In some cases there resulted an interchange of tales, until many belonging strictly to one cycle are found connected with another. Thus the Arthurian cycle has drawn largely from those of Gawain and Lancelot, and especially from the Grail legends.

The Arthurian cycle is probably the most comprehensive, varied, and widely disseminated of them all. These romances have entered into nearly all the literatures of Europe, being found in French, German, Spanish, and Italian, as well as in the English and Welsh. With them, in addition to many others, have been combined the Grail legends; and the various romances which formed the groundwork of Wagner's great music dramas are merely variations of the romances of the Arthurian cycle.

The historic material upon which these legends are based is very slight. During the latter part of the fifth century the Britons for a time made a successful stand against the Saxon invaders,

who had overrun the land. Under the leadership of a captain named Arthur, they had nearly broken the Saxon power, in twelve great battles, and gained a glorious victory, not far from the year 500, on Mount Badon. But the tide was only checked; the Saxons soon regained their power and swept the discomfited Britons back into the remoter regions of Wales and Scotland.

Arthur is mentioned by early chroniclers, such as Nennius and Gildas, but the first extended tale of his achievements was written by Geoffrey of Monmouth, in his *Historia,* about 1140. This author undoubtedly invented a considerable part of his history. Some years later Wace wrote on the same subject, adding much imaginative material to that of Geoffrey; and later, by some fifty years, Layamon rewrote the romance and added many incidents which were original with himself. Then followed lays, metrical romances, and prose romances, which crystallized the many floating tales and gave them greater dignity and currency. One of the most gifted and famous of the Arthurian romancers was Chrétien de Troyes, a Frenchman, who wrote six great Arthurian poems, among which was *Erec and Enid,* which was indirectly the source of Tennyson's *Geraint Idylls.* Another was the story of *Tristram,* which was the source of much material found in later writers.

The greatest single writer of Arthurian ro-

mances was Sir Thomas Malory, who wrote the *Morte Darthur*. Little is known about the man except that he was born about 1400, and that his great work was not published until some years after his death. It is an interesting fact that the book was published by Caxton on the first press ever set up in England, and was one of the first books to be so published.

Although the *Idylls* were not written consecutively, and though more than forty years elapsed between the publication of the first and that of the last, yet in a remarkable way they show the development of a single theme. And although they introduce many episodes and many heroes only remotely connected with Arthur, yet his great personality pervades the whole work and looms high above the greatest of the circle of knights who formed his Round Table. For instance, in "Gareth and Lynette" Gareth is easily the central figure of the idyll, and comparatively little is seen of Arthur, yet his personality pervades the whole poem, inspires Gareth to do his noblest deeds, and terrifies wrongdoers by the mere thought of his unswerving justice. So in "Geraint and Enid" the cruel and causeless jealousy of Geraint stands out in black relief against the sweetness and high nobility of the king, which is thus strongly glorified. A careful analysis of all the *Idylls* would show that the dominating character in each is Arthur. The consummate power of the

poet is shown clearly in his ability to keep the chief character constantly before the eye, even when he does not appear in the lines.

It has been observed that the action of the poem seems to follow closely the seasons of the year, though really it covers a number of years. In "The Coming of Arthur" we have the early springtime. The winter has passed away in the passing of the fierce wars against the pagans, and the clearing up of the waste lands for occupation. It is the joyous Maytime when Arthur sends for his beautiful bride, and the altar before which their vows are taken is bright and fragrant with the May-blooms. In "Gareth and Lynette" we find the warmer suns of June, with the strong constructive energies of the early summer in full activity, in the state as well as in nature. The king is busy establishing order and law, and in laying the deep and strong foundations of his kingdom. The trees are in full leaf, the birds fill the air with their music, and the whole atmosphere of the idyll is full of activity and sweetness and the pure joy of living. In the *Geraint Idylls* the season has advanced. The hay and the grain in the fields are ready for the harvester. The sun shines with its full power, and the weary laborer takes his siesta at noon in the grateful shade. The sky at times is overcast, and the sultry air, with its threatening storms, weakens the energies and at times gives birth to fearful forebodings.

In "Merlin and Vivian" and "Balin and Balan"

comes the full summer-time with its overpowering heats, its unrestrained passions, and the unchaining of the fearful forces of the tempest, which bring ruin and the crushing of hope. In "Lancelot and Elaine" the season is passing into the late summer and already are coming the dark forebodings of winter, wherein the energies of earth and sky are chilled into the sleep of death. The shadows have begun to lengthen and the death of all things is at hand.

In "The Holy Grail" we reach the early autumn, not in its beauty of colorings, but in the bleakness and loneliness of that season when the harvests have failed and the early blight of a fruitless year overshadows every soul with the certainty of failure. In "Pelleas and Ettarre" the shadows are still deepening and the impending doom is seen and felt in every heart. "The Last Tournament" speaks the last word of bitter condemnation. The skies are thick and murky, the leaves have fallen, all hopes have fled. Evil abides in every life, and doom is pronounced.

"Guinevere" ushers in the winter-tide of failure, disappointment, and death. Heavy mists fill the air and remorse gnaws the heart. The time for repentance is past, and there remains only the fearful looking for the appointed end of all things. One ray of light, only, penetrates the gloom, and that comes with the blameless king, who brings with him, in the darkness of the night,—the death of the year—the promise of a brighter dawning,—

a cheerier springtide,—in some distant, better land. In "The Passing of Arthur" the doom has fallen, and the icy hand of winter, the cheerless season of death, has fallen upon the land and upon every life. Passion has spent its force, the warmth of the sun has withdrawn itself, and there remains silence, desolation, death.

Thus the story of human life is told from the springtime of youth to the snows of age. The higher motives which should control all life are exemplified in the character of the blameless king, and the destructive influences of sin are shown with all the power of poetic genius and the fascination of romantic tales coupled with that profound philosophy of high living which, after all, is one of the great features of the genius of Tennyson.

Whether the *Idylls* are read as simple tales of mediæval life, or as allegories, which figure the virtues and vices of life in the seductive garb of chivalry, or as a presentation of a noble philosophy of life, with all the vividness and coloring with which art can clothe it, the *Idylls* must always remain among the most fascinating and suggestive of modern poems and as a supreme illustration of the high perfection of poetic art

The student will find the following books especially helpful in the study of the *Idylls: The Arthur of the English Poets,* Howard Maynadier, Houghton, Mifflin Company; *Tennyson, His Art and Relation to Modern Life,* Stopford Brooke,

G. P. Putnam's Sons; *Essays on Lord Tennyson's Idylls of the King,* by Harold Littledale, The Macmillan Company. An excellent account of the literature can be found in Schofield's *English Literature from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer,* The Macmillan Company.

IDYLLS OF THE KING

IDYLLS OF THE KING

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN,° the King of Cameliard,°
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle and, ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host°
Swarmed over-seas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius° lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either failed to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And through the puissance° of his Table Round,°
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reigned.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,

And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog and wolf and boar and bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallowed in the gardens of the King.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal°
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straightened, they grew up to wolf-like men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groaned for the Roman legions° here again
And Cæsar's eagle. Then his brother king,
Urien,° assailed him; last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,°
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But—for he heard of Arthur newly crowned,
Though not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, "He is not Uther's son"—the King
Sent to him, saying, "Arise, and help us thou!
For here between the man and beast we die."

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call and came; and Guinevere°
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield

The golden symbol° of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or marked not, if she saw,
One among many, though his face was bare.
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitched
His tents beside the forest. Then he drave
The heathen;° after, slew the beast, and felled
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight,
And so returned.

For while he lingered there,
A doubt that ever smouldered in the hearts
Of those great lords and barons of his realm
Flashed forth and into war; for most of these,
Colleaguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying: "Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs,° not the King;
This is the son of Anton,° not the King."

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail,° and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be joined° with Guinevere,
And thinking as he rode: "Her father said

That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be joined
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I joined with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live."

Thereafter—as he speaks° who tells the tale—
When Arthur reached a field of battle bright
With pitched pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.°
So when the King had set his banner broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
The long-lanced battle° let their horses run.
And now the barons and the kings prevailed,
And now the King, as here and there that war
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world

Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
And mightier of his hands with every blow,
And leading all his knighthood, threw the kings,°
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
Claudius, and Clariance° of Northumberland,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as° the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake
Flying, and Arthur called to stay the brands
That hacked among the flyers, "Ho! they yield!"°
So like a painted battle° the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
He laughed upon his warrior° whom he loved
And honored most. "Thou dost not doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day."
"Sir and my liege," he cried, "the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field.
I know thee for my King!"° Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, "Man's word is God in man;°
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death."°

Then quickly from the foughten field° he sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,°
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, "If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife."

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating—"How should I that am a king,
However much he holp me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?"—lifted his voice, and called
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: "Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?"

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said:
"Sir King, there be but two old men that know;
And each is twice as old as I; and one
Is Merlin,° the wise man that ever served
King Uther through his magic art, and one
Is Merlin's master—so they call him—Bleys,
Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote°
All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth."

To whom the King Leodogran replied:
"O friend,° had I been holpen half as well

By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me;
But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere."

Then, when they came before him, the King said:
"I have seen the cuckoo° chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chase; but wherefore now
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorloïs,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?"

And Ulfius and Brastias answered, "Ay."
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake—
For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the King—

"Sir, there be many rumors on this head;
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man;
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven. But my belief
In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time
The prince and warrior Gorloïs, he that held
Tintagil castle° by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne;°

And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,°
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur,—but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love;
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonor of his love
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war,
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther entered in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compassed by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness; afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.°
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief
That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Delivered at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come, because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,

And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and reared him with her own;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack; but now,
This year, when Merlin—for his hour had come—
Brought Arthur forth,° and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, 'Here is Uther's heir, your king,'
A hundred voices cried: 'Away with him!
No king of ours! a son of Gorloïs he,
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn.' Yet Merlin through his craft,
And while the people clamored for a king,
Had Arthur crowned; but after, the great lords
Banded, and so brake out in open war."

Then while the King debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorloïs after death,
Or Uther's son and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything
Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney,° Bellicent;
Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat:

"A doubtful throne° is ice on summer seas.
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men
Report him! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—
So many those that hate him, and so strong,
So few his knights, however brave they be—
Hath body enow° to hold his foemen down?"

"O King," she cried, "and I will tell thee; few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crowned on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
'Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee.' Then the King in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flushed, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

"But when he spake,° and cheered his Table Round
With large, divine, and comfortable words,
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld
From eye to eye through all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King;
And ere it left their faces, through the cross
And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote

Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

"And there I saw° mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

"And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,°
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—
Clothed in white samite,° mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,°
Whereby to drive the heathen out. A mist
Of incense curled about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters,° for she dwells
Down in a deep—calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world—and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

"There likewise I beheld Excalibur°
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur rowed across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim,° on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright°
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,

'Take me,' but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
'Cast me away!' And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counselled him,
'Take thou and strike! the time to cast away
Is yet far-off.' So this great brand the King
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down."

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and asked,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
"The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister;" and she said,
"Daughter of Gorloïs and Ygerne am I;"
"And therefore Arthur's sister?" asked the King.
She answered, "These be secret things," and signed
To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and followed by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw;
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard—the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer: "What know I?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I; and dark

Was Gorloïs; yea, and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness; but this king is fair°
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
'O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world.' "

"Ay," said the King, "and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?"

"O King!" she cried, "and I will tell thee true.
He found me first when yet a little maid.
Beaten I had been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wished that I were dead; and he—
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure—he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seemed, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,

But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

"But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling° lay the mage;
And when I entered told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending through the dismal night—a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost—
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seemed in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon winged, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Dropt to the cove, and watched the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one,° gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame;
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,

Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried, 'The King!
Here is an heir for Uther!' And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lashed at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter followed calm,
Free sky and stars. 'And this same child,' he said,
'Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told.' And saying this the seer
Went through the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Not ever to be questioned any more
Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and asked him if these things were truth—
The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas—
He laughed as is his wont, and answered me
In riddling triplets° of old time, and said:—

"'Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.

"'Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.

"'Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows;
Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'°

"So Merlin riddling angered me; but thou
Fear not to give this King thine only child,
Guinevere; so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter, and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing through the minds of men,
And echoed by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Though men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass, again to come, and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king."

She spake, and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing "Shall I answer yea or nay?"
Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw,
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Streamed to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest

And Lancelot . . . return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.

Slew on and burnt, crying, "No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours;"
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,
Crowned. And Leodogran awoke,° and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honored most, Sir Lancelot,° to ride forth
And bring the Queen, and watched him from the gates;
And Lancelot past away among the flowers—
For then was latter April—and returned
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric° the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines,° the King
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners° of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
Far shone the fields of May through open door,
The sacred altar blossomed white with May,
The sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,
Rolled incense, and there past along the hymns

A voice as of the waters, while the two
Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless love.
And Arthur said, "Behold, thy doom is mine.
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!"
To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,
"King and my lord, I love thee to the death!"
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake:
"Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!"

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine
Great lords from Rome° before the portal stood,
In scornful stillness gazing as they past;
Then while they paced a city all on fire
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:—

"Blow trumpet,° for the world is white with May!
Blow trumpet, the long night hath rolled away!
Blow through the living world—'Let the King reign!'

"Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battle-axe on helm,
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign!

"Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battle-axe, and flash brand! Let the King reign!

"Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! live the strength, and die the lust!
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

"Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is king, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

"Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

"The King will follow Christ, and we the King,
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!"

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.
There at the banquet those great lords from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in and claimed their tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake: "Behold, for these have sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,*
No tribute will we pay." So those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and through that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles* overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reigned.

GARETH AND LYNETTE

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth,° in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate.° A slender-shafted pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirled away.
"How he went down," said Gareth, "as a false knight
Or evil king before my lance, if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will,
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prisoned, and kept and coaxed and whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!
A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield° her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
Until she let me fly discaged° to sweep
In ever-highering° eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,

To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came
With Modred hither in the summer-time,
Asked me to tilt with him, the proven knight.
Modred for want of worthier was the judge.
Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,
"Thou hast half prevailed against me," said so—he—
Though Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is always sullen—what care I?"

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair
Asked, "Mother, though ye count me still the child,
Sweet mother, do ye love the child?" She laughed,
"Thou art but a wild-goose to question it."
"Then, mother, an ye love the child," he said,
"Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story." "Yea, my well-beloved,
An 'twere but of the goose and golden eggs."°

And Gareth answered her with kindling eyes:
"Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine
Was finer gold than any goose can lay;
For this an eagle, a royal eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.°
And there was ever haunting° round the palm
A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw

The splendor sparkling from aloft, and thought,
'An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,
Then were I wealthier than a leash° of kings.'
But ever when he reached a hand to climb,
One that had loved him from his childhood caught
And stayed him, 'Climb not lest thou break thy neck,
I charge thee by my love,' and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb° nor brake his neck,
But brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away."

To whom the mother said,
"True love, sweet son, had risked himself and climbed,
And handed down the golden treasure to him."

And Gareth answered her with kindling eyes:
"Gold? said I gold?—ay then, why he, or she,
Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured—*had* the thing I spake of been
Mere gold—but this was all of that true steel
Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings played about it in the storm,
And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the nest,
That sent him from his senses. Let me go."

Then Bellicent bemoaned herself and said:
"Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?

Lo, where thy father Lot° beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smouldered out!
For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there
A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,
No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows.
And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love.
Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,°
And thee, mine innocent, the jousts,° the wars,
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrenched or broken limb—an often° chance
In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,
Frights to my heart. But stay; follow the deer
By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;°
So make thy manhood mightier day by day.
Sweet is the chase; and I will seek thee out
Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year,
Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man."

Then Gareth: "An ye hold me yet for child,
Hear yet once more the story of the child.

For, mother, there was once a king, like ours.
The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,
Asked for a bride; and thereupon the king
Set two before him. One was fair, strong, armed—
But° to be won by force—and many men
Desired her; one, good lack,° no man desired.
And these were the conditions of the king:
That save he won the first by force, he needs
Must wed that other, whom no man desired,
A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile
That evermore she longed to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—
Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died of her.
And one—they called her Fame; and one—O mother,
How can ye keep me tethered to you?—Shame.°
Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King—
Else, wherefore born?"

To whom the mother said:
"Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not,
Or will not deem him, wholly proven king—
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him king
When I was frequent° with him in my youth,
And heard him kingly speak, and doubted him
No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,
Of closest kin to me. Yet—wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine all,

Life, limbs, for one that is not proven king?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son."

And Gareth answered quickly: "Not an hour,°
So that ye yield me—I will walk through fire,
Mother, to gain it—your full leave to go.
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruined Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crushed
The idolaters, and made the people free?
Who should be king save him who makes us free?"

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,°
She answered° craftily: "Will ye walk through fire?
Who walks through fire will hardly heed the smoke.
Ay, go then, an ye must; only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand."

And Gareth cried:
"A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!"°

But slowly spake the mother looking at him:
"Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,
And hire thyself to serve° for meats and drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,°
And those that hand the dish across the bar.°
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to any one.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day."°

For so the Queen believed that when her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down through villain kitchen-vassalage,°
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud
To pass thereby; so should he rest with her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied:
"The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And, since thou art my mother, must obey.
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King."

Gareth awhile lingered. The mother's eye
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turned,
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour
When, wakened by the wind which with full voice
Swept bellowing through the darkness on to dawn,

He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his birth,
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.
Southward they set their faces. The birds made
Melody on branch and melody in mid air.
The damp hill-slopes were quickened into green,
And the live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easter-day.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
That broadened toward the base of Camelot,°
Far off° they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flashed;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Pricked through the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that opened on the field below;
Anon, the whole fair city had disappeared,

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
One crying, "Let us go no further, lord;
Here is a city of enchanters, built
By fairy kings." The second echoed him,
"Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home
To northward, that this king is not the King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery

And Merlin's glamour." Then the first again,
"Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision."

Gareth answered them
With laughter, swearing he had glamour enow
In his own blood, his princedom, youth, and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin° in the Arabian sea;
So pushed them all unwilling toward the gate.
And there was no gate like it under heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake° stood; all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the cross her great and goodly arms
Stretched under all the cornice and upheld.
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately° that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
High on the top were those three queens, the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space
Stared at the figures that at last it seemed

The dragon-boughts° and elvish emblemings
Began to move, seethe, twine, and curl. They called
To Gareth, "Lord, the gateway is alive."

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes
So long that even to him they seemed to move.
Out of the city a blast of music pealed.
Back from the gate started the three, to whom
From out thereunder came an ancient man,°
Long-bearded, saying, "Who be ye, my sons?"

Then Gareth: "We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share in furrow come to see
The glories of our King; but these, my men—
Your city moved so weirdly in the mist—
Doubt if the King be king at all, or come
From Fairyland; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy kings and queens;
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision; and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth."

Then that old Seer° made answer, playing on him°
And saying: "Son, I have seen the good ship° sail
Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens,
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air;

And here is truth;° but an it please thee not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me.
For truly, as thou sayest, a fairy king
And fairy queens have built the city, son;
They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft°
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
And built it to the music of their harps.
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King;° though some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real.
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep; but, so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field.
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,°
And therefore built for ever."

Gareth spake
Angered: "Old master, reverence thine own beard°
That looks as white as utter truth, and seems
Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall!
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been
To thee fair-spoken?"

But the Seer replied:
"Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards:
'Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion'?
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.
And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie."

Unmockingly the mocker ending here,
Turned to the right, and past along the plain;
Whom Gareth looking after said: "My men,
Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
Let love be blamed° for it, not she, nor I.
Well, we will make amends."

With all good cheer
He spake and laughed, then entered with his twain
Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone;°
Which Merlin's hand,° the Mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touched, and everywhere,
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.°
And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall; his arms

Clashed, and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
And out of bower° and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendor of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom°—and looked no more—
But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, "For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak."
Yet pressing on, though all in fear to find
Sir Gawain° or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights that ranged about the throne
Clear honor shining like the dewy star
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gained, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King:
"A boon, Sir King! Thy father, Uther, reft
From my dead lord a field with violence;
For howsoe'er at first he proffered gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,

We yielded not; and then he reft us of it
Perforce and left us neither gold nor field."

Said Arthur, "Whether would ye?° gold or field?"
To whom the woman weeping, "Nay, my lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's eye."

And Arthur: "Have thy pleasant field again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did
Would shape himself a right!"

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him:
"A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy,° King, am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,
A knight of Uther in the barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.
Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son
Thralled in his castle, and hath starved him dead,
And standeth seized° of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.
So, though I scarce can ask it thee for hate,

Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son."

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,
"A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man."

Then came Sir Kay,° the seneschal, and cried,
"A boon, Sir King! even that thou grant her none,
This railer, that hath mocked thee in full hall—
None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag."°

But Arthur: "We sit King, to help the wronged
Through all our realm. The woman loves her lord.
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!
The kings of old had doomed thee to the flames;
Aurelius Emrys° would have scourged thee dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue; but get thee hence—
Lest that rough humor° of the kings of old
Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the right,
According to the justice of the King.
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man shall die."

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,°
A name of evil savor in the land,

The Cornish king. In either hand he bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines
A field of charlock° in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,
Delivering° that his lord, the vassal king,
Was even upon his way to Camelot;
For having heard that Arthur of his grace
Had made his goodly cousin° Tristram knight,
And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honor all the more;
So prayed him well to accept this cloth of gold,
In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree smouldered there. "The goodly knight!
What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?"
For, midway down the side of that long hall,
A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
Some blazoned, some but carven, and some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony shields,—
Rose, and high-arching overbrowed the hearth.
And under every shield a knight was named.
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall:
When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only; but if twain,
His arms were blazoned also; but if none,

The shield was blank and bare, without a sign
Saving the name beneath. And Gareth saw
The shield of Gawain blazoned rich and bright,
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

"More like are we to reave° him of his crown
Than make him knight because men call him king.
The kings we found, ye know we stayed their hands
From war among themselves, but left them kings;
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enrolled
Among us, and they sit within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnished the great name of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl;
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,°
Silenced for ever—craven—a man of plots,
Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings—
No fault of thine; let Kay the seneschal
Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied—°
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!"

And many another suppliant crying came
With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,
And evermore° a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth° leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,

Approached between them toward the King, and asked,
"A boon, Sir King,"—his voice was all ashamed,—
"For see ye not how weak and hunger-worn
I seem°—leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight."

To him the King:
"A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks, be thine."°

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien
Wan-sallow° as the plant that feels itself
Root-bitten by white lichen:

"Lo ye now!
This fellow hath broken from some abbey, where,
God wot,° he had not beef and brewis° enow,
However that might chance! but an° he work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog."

Then Lancelot° standing near: "Sir Seneschal,
Sleuth-hound° thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;
A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know.
Broad brows and fair, a fluent° hair and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands

Large, fair, and fine!—Some young lad's mystery—
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him."

Then Kay: "What murmurest thou of mystery?
Think ye this fellow will poison° the King's dish?
Nay, for he spake too fool-like; mystery!
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had asked
For horse and armor; fair and fine, forsooth!
Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands?° but see thou to it
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day
Undo thee not—and leave my man to me."

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage,
Ate with young lads his portion by the door,
And couched at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,
Would hustle and harry him, and labor him
Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach,° draw water, or hew wood,
Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bowed himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.

And when the thralls had talk among themselves,
And one would praise the love that linkt the
King
And Lancelot—how the King had saved his life
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's—
For Lancelot was the first in tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field—
Gareth was glad. Or if some other told
How once the wandering forester at dawn,
Far over the blue tarns° and hazy seas,
On Caer-Eryri's° highest found the King,
A naked babe,° of whom the Prophet spake,
"He passes to the Isle Avilion,°
He passes and is healed and cannot die"—
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,
Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay,° and so loud
That first they mocked, but, after, reverenced him.
Or Gareth, telling some prodigious° tale
Of knights who sliced a red life-bubbling way
Through twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a gap-mouthed° circle his good mates
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
Charmed; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come
Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind°
Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.
Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,
So there were any trial of mastery,
He, by two yards° in casting bar or stone,
Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust,

So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights
Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy
Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;
But in the weeks that followed, the good Queen,
Repentant of the word she made him swear,
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent° and de-crescent moon,
Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval° on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laughed; he sprang. "Out of the smoke, at once
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—°
These news° be mine, none other's—nay, the King's—
Descend into the city;" whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

"I have staggered° thy strong Gawain in a tilt
For pastime; yea, he said it; joust can I.
Make me thy knight—in secret! let my name

Be hidden, and give me the first quest; I spring
Like flame from ashes."

Here the King's calm eye°
Fell on, and checked, and made him flush, and bow
Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answered him:
"Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.
Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King."

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees:
"My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.
For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and drinks!
And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing."

And the King:
"Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,
Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must know."

"Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest!"

And the King:
"But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?
Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
Than to be noised of."

Merrily Gareth asked:
"Have I not earned° my cake in baking of it?
Let be my name until I make my name!
My deeds will speak; it is but for a day."
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly
Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.
Then, after summoning Lancelot privily:
"I have given him the first quest;° he is not proven.
Look therefore, when he calls for this in hall,
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield,° and see,
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain."

Then that same day there past into the hall
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom,° and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted° like the petal of a flower.
She into hall past with her page and cried:

"O King, for° thou hast driven the foe without,
See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset

By bandits, every one that owns a tower
The lord for half a league.° Why sit ye there?
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
Till even the lonest° hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed as thine altar-cloth
From that best blood° it is a sin to spill."

"Comfort thyself," said Arthur, "I nor mine
Rest; so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be
Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name? thy need?"

"My name?" she said—
"Lynette,° my name; noble;° my need, a knight
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,°
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.
She lives in Castle Perilous.° A river
Runs in three loops about her living-place;
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth,
And of that four the mightiest, holds her stayed
In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with him;
And but delays his purport° till thou send
To do the battle with him thy chief man
Sir Lancelot, whom he trusts to overthrow,

Then wed, with glory; but she will not wed
Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.°
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot."

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth asked:
"Damsel, ye know this Order° lives to crush
All wrongers of the realm. But say, these four,
Who be they? What the fashion of the men?"

"They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry°
Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;
Courteous or bestial from the moment,° such
As have nor law nor king; and three of these
Proud in their fantasy° call themselves the Day,
Morning-Star,° and Noon-Sun,° and Evening-Star,°
Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise
The fourth, who always rideth armed in black,
A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape° the three,
Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.
And all these four be fools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot."

Hereat Sir Gareth called from where he rose,
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,

"A boon, Sir King—this quest!" then—for he marked
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—
"Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty through thy meats and drinks am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King," and Arthur glancing at him,
Brought down a momentary brow. "Rough, sudden,
And pardonable, worthy to be knight—°
Go therefore," and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath
Slew the may-white;° she lifted either arm,
"Fie on thee, King! I asked for thy chief knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave."
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turned,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside
The field of tourney, murmuring "kitchen-knave!"

Now two great entries opened from the hall,
At one end one that gave upon a range°
Of level pavement where the King would pace
At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped

Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers;
And out by this main doorway past the King.
But one was counter° to the hearth, and rose
High that the highest-crested° helm could ride
Therethrough nor graze; and by this entry fled
The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door
King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,
A war-horse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had followed him.
This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that held
The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed
A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,
A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it, like a fuel-smothered fire°
That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flashed as those
Dull-coated things,° that making slide apart
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns
A jewelled harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flashed in arms.
Then as he donned the helm, and took the shield
And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of grain
Storm-strengthened° on a windy site, and tipt
With trenchant° steel, around him slowly prest
The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had worked
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,
Mounted in arms. threw up their caps and cried,

"God bless the King, and all his fellowship!"
And on through lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur°
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause
Be cooled by fighting, follows, being named,
His owner, but remembers all, and growls
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
Muttered in scorn of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle.

"Bound upon a quest
With horse and arms—the King hath past his time—°
My scullion knave! Thralls, to your work again,
For an your fire° be low ye kindle mine!
Will there be dawn in West and eve in East?
Begone!—my knave!—belike and like enow
Some old head-blow not heeded in his youth
So shook his wits they wander in his prime—
Crazed!° How the villain lifted up his voice,
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave!
Tut, he was tame and meek enow with me,
Till peacocked° up with Lancelot's noticing.
Well—I will after my loud knave, and learn
Whether he know me for his master yet.
Out of the smoke he came, and so° my lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire—

Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
Into the smoke again."

But Lancelot said:
"Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King,
For that did never he whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee?
Abide; take counsel; for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword."
"Tut, tell not me," said Kay, "ye are overfine°
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies;"
Then mounted, on through silent faces rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Muttered the damsel: "Wherefore did the King
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than—O sweet heaven! O fie upon him!—
His kitchen-knave."

To whom Sir Gareth drew—
And there were none but few goodlier than he—
Shining in arms, "Damsel, the quest is mine.
Lead, and I follow." She thereat, as one
That smells a foul-fleshed agaric° in the holt,°
And deems it carrion° of some woodland thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,°
"Hence!

Avoid,° thou smellest all of kitchen-grease.
And look who comes behind;" for there was Kay.
"Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.
We lack thee by the hearth."

And Gareth to him,
"Master no more! too well I know thee, ay—
The most ungentle° knight in Arthur's hall."
"Have at thee then," said Kay; they shocked, and Kay
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
"Lead, and I follow," and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stayed, and overtaken spoke:

"What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master—thou!—
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon!°—to me
Thou smellest all of kitchen as before."

"Damsel," Sir Gareth answered gently, "say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefore."

"Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face."

"I shall assay," said Gareth with a smile
That maddened her, and away she flashed again
Down the long avenues of a boundless wood;
And Gareth following was again beknaved:°

"Sir Kitchen-knave, I have missed the only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood;
The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves;
If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit° of thine?
Fight, an thou canst; I have missed the only way."

So till the dusk that followed evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,
Bowl-shaped, through tops of many thousand pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,
Round as the red eye of an eagle-owl,°
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts
Ascended, and there brake a servingman

Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
"They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere."
Then Gareth, "Bound am I to right the wronged,
But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee."
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,
"Lead, and I follow," Gareth cried again,
"Follow, I lead!" so down among the pines
He plunged; and there, black-shadowed nigh the mere,
And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed,
Saw six tall men haling° a seventh along,
A stone about his neck to drown him in it.
Three with good blows he quieted, but three
Fled through the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone
From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled° up the mere.
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
Set him, a stalwart baron, Arthur's friend.

"Well that ye came, or else these caitiff° rogues
Had wreaked themselves on me; good cause is theirs
To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
To catch my thief, and then like vermin here
Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;
And under this wan° water many of them
Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
And rise, and flickering in a grimly° light

Dance on the mere. Good now,° ye have saved a life
Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.
And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.
What guerdon will ye?"

Gareth sharply spake:
"None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,
In uttermost obedience to the King.
But wilt thou yield this damsel harborage?"

Whereat the baron saying, "I well believe
You be of Arthur's Table," a light laugh°
Broke from Lynette: "Ay, truly of a truth,
And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave!—
But deem not I accept thee aught the more,
Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
Down on a rout° of craven foresters.
A thresher with his flail had scattered them.
Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen still.
But an this lord will yield us harborage,
Well."

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,
All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
His towers, where that day a feast had been
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
And many a costly cate,° received the three.
And there they placed a peacock in his pride°
Before the damsel, and the baron set
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

"Meseems, that here is much discourtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,
And prayed the King would grant me Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night—
The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I called—
Suddenly bawls this frontless° kitchen-knave,
'The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty through thy meats and drinks am I?'
Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
'Go therefore,' and so gives the quest to him—
Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman."

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed, the lord
Now looked at one and now at other, left
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
And, seating Gareth at another board,
Sat down beside him, ate and then began:

"Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the King,
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not; but thou strikest a strong stroke,
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,
And saver of my life; and therefore now,

For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh
Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,°
The saver of my life."

And Gareth said,
"Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell."

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved
Had, some brief space, conveyed them on their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,
"Lead, and I follow." Haughtily she replied:

"I fly no more; I allow thee for an hour.
Lion and stoat° have isled together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks
Some ruth° is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?
For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee; then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth."

To whom Sir Gareth answered courteously:
"Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find

My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes° and wedded the King's son."

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethrough the serpent river coiled, they came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream
Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily° in hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarmed, and calling, "Damsel, is this he,
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall,
For whom we let thee pass?" "Nay, nay," she said,
"Sir Morning-Star.° The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave; and look thou to thyself.
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarmed; he is not knight but knave."

Then at his call, "O daughters of the Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,
Arm me," from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls
In gilt and rosy raiment came. Their feet

In dewy grasses glistened; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.°
These armed him in blue arms, and gave a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him shone,
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watched him: "Wherefore stare ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear. There yet is time;
Flee down the valley before he get to horse.
Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave."

Said Gareth: "Damsel, whether knave or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;
But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger through mine arms, I know
That I shall overthrow him."

And he that bore
The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge:

"A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.
For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly,° knave.
Avoid; for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady."

"Dog, thou liest!
I spring from loftier lineage than thine own."
He spake; and all at fiery speed the two
Shocked on the central bridge, and either spear
Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,
Hurled as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,
And Gareth lashed so fiercely with his brand
He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,
The damsel crying, "Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!"
Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fallen, "Take not my life; I yield."
And Gareth, "So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace."
She reddening, "Insolent scullion! I of thee?
I bound to thee for any favor asked!"
"Then shall he die." And Gareth there unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but she shrieked,
"Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself." "Damsel, thy charge
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave
His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself when I return will plead for thee.
Thy shield is mine—farewell; and, damsel, thou,
Lead, and I follow."

And fast away she fled;
Then when he came upon her, spake: "Methought,
Knave, when I watched thee striking on the bridge,
The savor of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier; but the wind hath changed;
I scent it twenty-fold." And then she sang,°
"'O morning star'—not that tall felon there
Whom thou, by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthrown,—

'O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven true,
Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me.'

"But thou begone, take counsel, and away,
For hard by here is one that guards a ford—
The second brother in their fool's parable—
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.

Care not for shame; thou art not knight but knave."

To whom Sir Gareth answered, laughingly:
"Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was kitchen-knave among the rest,
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates
Owned a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,
'Guard it,' and there was none to meddle with it.
And such a coat art thou, and thee the King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee—and—knight or knave—
The knave that doth thee service as full knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing."

"Ay, Sir Knave!
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more."

"Fair damsel, you should worship me the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies."

"Ay, ay," she said, "but thou shalt meet thy match."

So when they touched the second river-loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnished to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun°
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower°

That blows a globe of after arrowlets
Ten-thousand-fold had grown, flashed the fierce shield,
All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turned from watching him.
He from beyond the roaring shallow roared,
"What doest thou, brother,° in my marches here?"
And she athwart the shallow shrilled again,
"Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms."
"Ugh!" cried the Sun, and, vizoring up a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Pushed horse across the foamings of the ford,
Whom Gareth met mid-stream; no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill; four strokes they struck
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight
Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,
The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream
Descended, and the Sun was washed away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that fought no more,
As being all bone-battered on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
"Myself when I return will plead for thee.

Lead, and I follow." Quietly she led.
"Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?"
"Nay, not a point; nor art thou victor here.
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.

" 'O sun'—not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,
Hast overthrown through mere unhappiness—

" 'O sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,
O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly; twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou of love-song or of love?
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,
Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance,—

" 'O dewy flowers that open to the sun,
O dewy flowers that close when day is done,
Blow sweetly; twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round
The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's head?
Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.°

" 'O birds that warble to the morning sky,
O birds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly; twice my love hath smiled on me.'

"What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis,° merle,
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth
May-music growing with the growing light,
Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare—
So runs thy fancy—these be for the spit,
Larding and basting. See thou have not now
Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their allegory."

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow,
All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seemed, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight
That named himself the Star of Evening stood.

And Gareth, "Wherefore waits the madman there
Naked in open day-shine?" "Nay," she cried,
"Not naked, only wrapt in hardened skins°
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armor off him, these will turn the blade."

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge,
"O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up; but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?" and the damsel cried:

"No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven

And Gareth overthrew him . . .

With all disaster° unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone down
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star,
Art thou not old?"

"Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys."
Said Gareth, "Old, and over-bold in brag!
But that same strength which threw the Morning Star
Can throw the Evening."

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.
"Approach and arm me!" With slow steps from out
An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stained
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And armed him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the star of even
Half-tarnished and half-bright, his emblem, shone.
But when it glittered o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurled together on the bridge;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,
But up like fire he started; and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,

Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labored within him, for he seemed as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
"Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!"
He half despairs; so Gareth seemed to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamoring all the while,
"Well done,° knave-knight, well stricken, O good knight-knave—
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights—
Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied—
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round—
His arms are old, he trusts the hardened skin—
Strike—strike—the wind will never change again."
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hewed great pieces of his armor off him,
But lashed in vain against the hardened skin,
And could not wholly bring him under, more
Than loud Southwesterns,° rolling ridge on ridge,
The buoy° that rides at sea, and dips and springs
For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clashed his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.
"I have thee now;" but forth that other sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining even his uttermost
Cast, and so hurled him headlong o'er the bridge

Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,
"Lead, and I follow."

But the damsel said:
"I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.

"'O trefoil,° sparkling on the rainy plain,
O rainbow with three colors after rain,
Shine sweetly; thrice my love hath smiled on me.'

"Sir,—and, good faith, I fain had added—Knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a knave,—
Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee. Noble I am; and thought the King
Scorned me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answered courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal
As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit.° I marvel what thou art."

"Damsel," he said, "you be not all to blame,
Saving that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one
Not fit to cope your quest. You said your say;
Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth! I hold
He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet
To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
His heart be stirred with any foolish heat
At any gentle damsel's waywardness.

Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings fought for me;
And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks
There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,
Hath force to quell me."

Nigh upon that hour
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg,° and stretching dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
Then turned the noble damsel smiling at him,
And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
Where bread and baken meats and good red wine
Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow comb° wherein
Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse
Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.
"Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,
Whose holy hand hath fashioned on the rock
The war of Time against the soul of man.
And yon four fools have sucked their allegory
From these damp walls, and taken but the form.
Know ye not these?" and Gareth lookt and read—
In letters like to those the vexillary°
Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt—

"PHOSPHORUS,"° then "MERIDIES," — "HESPERUS"—
"NOX"—"MORS," beneath five figures, armed men,
Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a shape that fled
With broken wings, torn raiment, and loose hair,
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.°
"Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
Who comes behind?"

For one—delayed at first
Through helping back the dislocated Kay
To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,
The damsel's headlong error through the wood—
Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops—
His blue shield-lions covered—softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
"Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend."
And Gareth crying pricked against the cry;
But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch
Of that skilled spear, the wonder of the world—
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his hands
He laughed; the laughter jarred upon Lynette.
Harshly she asked him, "Shamed and overthrown,
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?"
"Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son

Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,
And victor of the bridges and the ford,
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom
I know not, all through mere unhappiness—
Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
Out, sword; we are thrown!" And Lancelot answered: "Prince,
O Gareth—through the mere unhappiness
Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole
As on the day when Arthur knighted him."

Then Gareth: "Thou—Lancelot!—thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast
Thy brethren of thee make—which could not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot—thou!"

Whereat the maiden, petulant: "Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when called? and wherefore now
Come ye, not called? I gloried in my knave,
Who being still rebuked would answer still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fooled and tricked,
And only wondering wherefore played upon;

And doubtful whether I and mine be scorned.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool,
I hate thee and for ever."

And Lancelot said:
"Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise,
To call him shamed who is but overthrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.
Victor from vanquished issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven, and thy good horse
And thou are weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood through that wearied lance of thine.
Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,
And thou hast wreaked his justice on his foes,
And when reviled hast answered graciously,
And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, knight,
Hail, knight and prince, and of our Table Round!"

And then when turning to Lynette he told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said:
"Ay, well—ay, well—for worse than being fooled
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks

And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek, till we find." And when they sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed:
"Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—
Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hushed night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot,"—and she clapt her hands—
"Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with him.
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;
Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment."

Said Lancelot: "Peradventure he you name
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
Not to be spurred, loving the battle as well

As he that rides him." "Lancelot-like," she said,
"Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all."

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutched the shield:
"Ramp,° ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these°
Streams virtue—fire—through one that will not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.
Hence; let us go."

Silent the silent field
They traversed. Arthur's Harp° though summer-wan,
In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.
A star shot: "Lo," said Gareth, "the foe falls!"
An owl whoopt: "Hark the victor pealing there!"
Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying:
"Yield, yield him this again; 'tis he must fight:
I curse the tongue that all through yesterday

Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now
To lend thee horse and shield. Wonders ye have done;
Miracles ye cannot. Here is glory enow
In having flung the three. I see thee maimed,
Mangled; I swear thou canst not fling the fourth."

"And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.
You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appal me from the quest."

"Nay, prince," she cried,
"God wot, I never looked upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watched him have I like a phantom pass
Chilling the night; nor have I heard the voice.
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him
As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad, and girl—yea, the soft babe!
Some hold that he hath swallowed infant flesh,
Monster! O prince, I went for Lancelot first,
The quest is Lancelot's; give him back the shield."

Said Gareth laughing, "An he fight for this,
Belike he wins it as the better man;
Thus—and not else!"°

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings° of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than himself;
How best to manage horse, lance, sword, and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skill and fineness.° Instant were his words.

Then Gareth: "Here be rules. I know but one—
To dash against mine enemy and to win.
Yet have I watched thee victor in the joust,
And seen thy way." "Heaven help thee!" sighed Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whispered, "There."
And all the three were silent seeing, pitched
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath through all the horn.
Echoed the walls; a light twinkled; anon
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;
Whereon were hollow tramplings up and down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;
Till high above him, circled with her maids,

The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands and courtesy. But when the prince
Three times had blown—after long hush—at last—
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Through those black foldings, that which housed therein.
High on a night-black horse, in night-black arms,
With white breast-bone,° and barren ribs of Death,
And crowned with fleshless laughter°—some ten steps—
In the half-light—through the dim dawn—advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly:
"Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers
As if for pity?" But he spake no word;
Which set the horror higher. A maiden swooned;

The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,
As doomed to be the bride of Night and Death;
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm;
And even Sir Lancelot through his warm blood felt
Ice strike, and all that marked him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neighed,
And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward with him.
Then those that did not blink the terror° saw
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm
As thoroughly as the skull; and out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, "Knight,
Slay me not; my three brethren bade me do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dreamed the passes would be past."°
Answered Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, "My fair child,
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight
Of Arthur's hall?" "Fair Sir, they bade me do it.

They hate the King and Lancelot, the King's friend;
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream;
They never dreamed the passes could be past."

Then sprang the happier day from underground;
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance
And revel and song, made merry over Death,
As being after all their foolish fears
And horrors only proven a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived, and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale° in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he that told it later° says Lynette.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her as he loved the light of heaven.
And as the light of heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved Geraint
To make her beauty vary day by day,
In crimsons and in purples and in gems.
And Enid, but to please her husband's eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a state
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendor; and the Queen herself,
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service done,
Loved her, and often with her own white hands
Arrayed and decked her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court.
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true heart
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth.
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced Geraint.
But when a rumor rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,

Though yet there lived no proof, nor yet was heard
The world's loud whisper breaking into storm,
Not less Geraint believed it; and there fell
A horror° on him lest his gentle wife,
Through that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffered or should suffer any taint
In nature; wherefore, going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his princedom lay
Close on the borders of a territory
Wherein were bandit earls, and caitiff knights,
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law;
And therefore, till the King himself should please
To cleanse this common sewer of all his realm,°
He craved a fair permission° to depart,
And there defend his marches. And the King
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land;
Where, thinking that, if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compassed her with sweet observances
And worship,° never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful° of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his princedom and its cares.
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her.

And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all gone,
And molten° down in mere uxoriousness.
And this she gathered from the people's eyes;
This too the women who attired her head,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless love,
Told Enid, and they saddened her the more;
And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy;
While he, that watched her sadden, was the more
Suspicious that her nature had a taint.°

At last, it chanced that on a summer morn—
They sleeping each by either—the new sun
Beat through the blindless casement of the room,
And heated the strong warrior in his dreams;
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle sloped,
As slopes° a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it.
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk
And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and, bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said:

"O noble breast and all-puissant arms,
Am I the cause, I the poor cause that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is gone?
I *am* the cause, because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they say.
And yet I hate that he should linger here;
I cannot love my lord and not his name.
Far liefer had I gird his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mightful hand striking great blows
At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world.
Far better were I laid in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dear arms,
And darkened from the high light in his eyes,
Than that my lord through me should suffer shame.
Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine eyes,
And yet not dare to tell him what I think,
And how men slur him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminacy?
O me, I fear that I am no true wife!"

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her weep
True tears upon his broad and naked breast,
And these awoke him, and by great mischance
He heard but fragments of her later words,

And that she feared she was not a true wife.
And then he thought, "In spite of all my care,
For all my pains,° poor man, for all my pains,
She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's hall."
Then, though he loved and reverenced her too much
To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
Right through his manful breast darted the pang
That makes a man, in the sweet face of her
Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable.
At this he hurled° his huge limbs out of bed,
And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
"My charger and her palfrey;"° then to her,
"I will ride forth into the wilderness;
For, though it seems my spurs are yet to win,°
I have not fallen so low as some would wish.
And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress
And ride with me." And Enid asked, amazed,
"If Enid errs, let Enid learn her fault."
But he, "I charge thee, ask not, but obey."
Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
A faded mantle and a faded veil,
And moving toward a cedarn° cabinet,
Wherein she kept them folded reverently
With sprigs of summer° laid between the folds
She took them, and arrayed herself therein
Remembering when first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it.
And all her foolish fears about the dress,

And all his journey to her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

For Arthur° on the Whitsuntide° before
Held court at old Caerleon upon Usk.°
There on a day, he sitting high in hall,
Before him came a forester of Dean,°
Wet from the woods, with notice of a hart
Taller than all his fellows, milky-white,
First seen that day; these things he told the King.
Then the good King gave order to let blow
His horns for hunting on the morrow morn,
And when the Queen petitioned for his leave
To see the hunt, allowed it easily.
So with the morning all the court were gone.
But Guinevere lay late into the morn,
Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming° of her love
For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt,
But rose at last, a single maiden with her,
Took horse, and forded Usk, and gained the wood;
There, on a little knoll beside it stayed
Waiting to hear the hounds but heard instead
A sudden sound of hoots for Prince Geraint,
Late also wearing neither hunting-dress
Nor weapon save a golden-hilted brand
Came quickly flashing through the shallow ford
Behind them, and so galloped up the knoll.
A purple scarf, at either end whereof
There swung an apple of the purest gold
Swayed round about him, as he galloped up

To join them, glancing like a dragon-fly
In summer suit and silks of holiday.
Low bowed the tributary prince, and she,
Sweetly and statelily, and with all grace
Of womanhood and queenhood, answered him:
"Late, late, Sir Prince," she said, "later than we!"
"Yea, noble Queen," he answered, "and so late
That I but come like you to see the hunt,
Not join it." "Therefore wait with me," she said;
"For on this little knoll, if anywhere,
There is good chance that we shall hear the hounds:
Here often they break covert at our feet."

And while they listened for the distant hunt,
And chiefly for the baying of Cavall,°
King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode
Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf;
Whereof the dwarf lagged latest, and the knight
Had visor up, and showed a youthful face,
Imperious, and of haughtiest lineaments.
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desired his name, and sent
Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf,
Who being vicious, old, and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not know.
"Then will I ask it of himself," she said.

"Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not," cried the dwarf;
"Thou art not worthy even to speak of him;"
And when she put her horse toward the knight,
Struck at her with his whip, and she returned
Indignant to the Queen; whereat Geraint
Exclaiming, "Surely I will learn the name,"
Made sharply to the dwarf, and asked it of him,
Who answered as before; and when the prince
Had put his horse in motion toward the knight,
Struck at him with his whip, and cut his cheek.
The prince's blood spirted upon the scarf,
Dyeing it; and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him:
But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wroth to be wroth° at such a worm, refrained
From even a word, and so returning said:

"I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself;
And I will track this vermin to their earths;°
For though I ride unarmed, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at, arms
On loan, or else for pledge;° and, being found,
Then will I fight him, and will break his pride,
And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fallen in fight. Farewell."

"Farewell, fair prince," answered the stately Queen.

"Be prosperous in this journey, as in all;
And may you light on all things that you love,
And live to wed with her whom first you love.
But ere you wed with any, bring your bride,
And I, were she the daughter of a king,
Yea, though she were a beggar from the hedge,° 230
Will clothe her for her bridals like the sun."

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that he heard
The noble hart at bay, now the far horn,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile° occasion, rode, 235
By ups and downs, through many a grassy glade
And valley, with fixt eye following the three.
At last they issued from the world of wood,
And climbed upon a fair and even ridge,
And showed themselves against the sky, and sank. 240
And thither came Geraint, and underneath
Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress rose;
And on one side a castle in decay, 245
Beyond a bridge that spanned a dry ravine.
And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clamor of the rocks
At distance, ere they settle for the night. 250

And onward to the fortress rode the three,

And entered and were lost behind the walls.
"So," thought Geraint, "I have tracked him to his earth."
And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel° full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who scoured
His master's armor; and of such a one
He asked, "What means the tumult in the town?"
Who told him, scouring still, "The sparrow-hawk!"
Then riding close behind an ancient churl
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,°
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Asked yet once more what meant the hubbub here?
Who answered gruffly, "Ugh! the sparrow-hawk!"
Then riding further past an armorer's,
Who, with back turned. and bowed above his work,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the selfsame query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him said:
"Friend, he that labors for the sparrow-hawk
Has little time for idle questioners."
Whereat Geraint flashed into sudden spleen:°
"A thousand pips° eat up your sparrow-hawk!
Tits, wrens, and all winged nothings peck him dead!
Ye think the rustic cackle of your bourg

The murmur of the world! What is it to me?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparrow-hawks!
Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-mad,
Where can I get me harborage for the night?
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy? Speak!"
Whereat the armorer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in hand
And answered: "Pardon me, O stranger knight;
We hold a tourney here to-morrow morn,
And there is scantly time for half the work.
Arms? truth! I know not; all are wanted here.
Harborage? truth, good truth, I know not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder." He spoke and fell to work again.

Then rode Geraint, a little spleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spanned the dry ravine.
There musing sat the hoary-headed earl—
His dress a suit of frayed magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony—and said:
"Whither, fair son?" to whom Geraint replied,
"O friend, I seek a harborage for the night."
Then Yniol, "Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-doored."
"Thanks, venerable friend," replied Geraint;
"So that ye do not serve me sparrow-hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat

With all the passion° of a twelve hours' fast."
Then sighed and smiled the hoary-headed earl,
And answered, "Graver cause than yours is mine
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparrow-hawk.
But in, go in; for save yourself desire it,
We will not touch upon him even in jest."

Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His charger trampling many a prickly star
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He looked and saw that all was ruinous.
Here stood a shattered archway plumed with fern;
And here had fallen a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding° flowers;
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound
Bare to the sun, and monstrous ivy-stems°
Claspt the gray walls with hairy-fibred arms,
And sucked the joining of the stones, and looked
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove.

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear through the open casement of the hall,
Singing; and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander° in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,

So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint,
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men°
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice° gemmed with green and red,
And he suspends his converse with a friend,
Or it may be the labor of his hands,
To think or say, "There is the nightingale:"
So fared it with Geraint, who thought and said,
"Here, by God's grace,° is the one voice for me."

It chanced the song° that Enid sang was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid sang:

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel, and lower the proud;
Turn thy wild wheel through sunshine, storm, and cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown;
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.

"Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands;
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man and master of his fate.

"Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd;
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud;
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

"Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn the nest,"

Said Yniol; "enter quickly." Entering then,
Right o'er a mount of newly-fallen stones,
The dusky-raftered many cobwebbed hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim brocade;
And near her, like a blossom vermeil-white°
That lightly breaks a faded flower-sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought Geraint,
"Here, by God's rood,° is the one maid for me."
But none spake word except the hoary earl:

"Enid, the good knight's horse stands in the court;
Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then
Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine;
And we will make us merry as we may.
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great."

He spake; the prince, as Enid past him, fain
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught
His purple scarf, and held, and said, "Forbear!
Rest! the good house, though ruined, O my son,
Endures not that her guest should serve himself."
And reverencing the custom of the house,
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forebore.

So Enid took his charger to the stall,
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reached the town, and while the prince and earl
Yet spoke together, came again with one,

And Enid . . . waited on the three.

A youth that, following with a costrel,° bore
The means of goodly welcome, flesh and wine.
And Enid brought sweet cakes to make them cheer,
And, in her veil enfolded, manchet bread.°
And then, because their hall must also serve
For kitchen, boiled the flesh, and spread the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the three.
And, seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb
That crossed the trencher as she laid it down.
But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his veins,
Let his eye rove in following, or rest
On Enid at her lowly handmaid-work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky hall;
Then suddenly addrest the hoary earl:

"Fair host and earl, I pray your courtesy;
This sparrow-hawk, what is he? tell me of him.
His name? but no, good faith, I will not have it;
For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have I sworn
From his own lips to have it—I am Geraint
Of Devon—for this morning when the Queen
Sent her own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen° thing,

Struck at her with his whip, and she returned
Indignant to the Queen; and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have it of him.
And all unarmed I rode, and thought to find
Arms in your town, where all the men are mad;
They take° the rustic murmur of their bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world.
They would not hear me speak; but if ye know
Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have sworn
That I will break his pride and learn his name,
Avenging this great insult done the Queen."

Then cried Earl Yniol: "Art thou he indeed
Geraint, a name far-sounded among men
For noble deeds? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your state
And presence might have guessed you one of those
That eat in Arthur's hall at Camelot.
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery;
For this dear child hath often heard me praise
Your feats of arms, and often when I paused
Hath asked again, and ever loved to hear;
So grateful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wrong.
O, never yet had woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden; first Limours,

A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he wooed; and be he dead
I know not, but he past to the wild land.°
The second was your foe, the sparrow-hawk,
My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke;
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sowed a slander in the common ear,
Affirming° that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not rendered to him;
Bribed with large promises the men who served
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Through open doors and hospitality;
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sacked my house;
From mine own earldom foully ousted me;
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet;
And keeps me in this ruinous castle here,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death
But that his pride too much despises me.
And I myself sometimes despise myself;
For I have let men be and have their way,
Am much too gentle, have not used my power;
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish; only this I know,

That whatsoever evil happen to me,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb,
But can endure it all most patiently."

"Well said, true heart," replied Geraint, "but arms,
That if the sparrow-hawk, this nephew, fight
In next day's tourney I may break his pride."

And Yniol answered: "Arms, indeed, but old
And rusty, old and rusty, Prince Geraint,
Are mine, and therefore, at thine asking, thine.
But in this tournament can no man tilt,
Except the lady he loves best° be there.
Two forks are fixt into the meadow ground,
And over these is placed a silver wand,
And over that a golden sparrow-hawk,
The prize of beauty for the fairest there.
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side,
And tilts with my good nephew thereupon,
Who being apt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earned himself the name of sparrow-hawk.
But thou, that hast no lady, canst not fight."

To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied,
Leaning a little toward him: "Thy leave!
Let me lay lance in rest, O noble host,
For this dear child, because I never saw,

Though having seen all beauties of our time,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair.
And if I fall her name will yet remain
Untarnished as before; but if I live,
So aid me heaven when at mine uttermost
As I will make her truly my true wife!"

Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heart
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days.
And looking round he saw not Enid there—
Who hearing her own name had stolen away—
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said:
"Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood.
Go thou to rest, but ere thou go to rest
Tell her, and prove her heart° toward the prince."

So spake the kindly-hearted earl, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarrayed as to her rest, the girl;
Whom first she kissed on either cheek, and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart. But never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her;
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,

Sank her sweet head upon her gentle breast;
Nor did she lift an eye nor speak a word,
Rapt in the fear and in the wonder of it.
So moving without answer to her rest
She found no rest, and ever failed to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating her own unworthiness;
And when the pale and bloodless east began
To quicken to the sun, arose, and raised
Her mother too, and hand in hand they moved
Down to the meadow where the jousts were held,
And waited there for Yniol and Geraint.

And thither came the twain, and when Geraint
Beheld her first in field, awaiting him,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could move
The Chair of Idris.° Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but through these
Prince-like his bearing shone; and errant knights
And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flowed in and settling circled all the lists.
And there they fixt the forks into the ground,
And over these they placed the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk.
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
Spake to the lady with him and proclaimed,
"Advance and take, the fairest of the fair,
What I these two years past have won for thee,
The prize of beauty." Loudly spake the prince,

"Forbear; there is a worthier," and the knight
With some surprise and thrice as much disdain
Turned, and beheld the four, and all his face
Glowed like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
"Do battle for it then," no more; and thrice
They clashed together, and thrice they brake their spears.
Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lashed at each
So often and with such blows that all the crowd
Wondered, and now and then from distant walls
There came a clapping as of phantom hands.
So twice they fought, and twice they breathed, and still
The dew of their great labor and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, drained their force.
But either's force was matched till Yniol's cry,
"Remember that great insult done the Queen,"
Increased Geraint's, who heaved his blade aloft,
And cracked the helmet through, and bit the bone,
And felled him, and set foot upon his breast,
And said, "Thy name?" To whom the fallen man
Made answer, groaning: "Edyrn, son of Nudd!
Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee.
My pride is broken; men have seen my fall."
"Then, Edyrn, son of Nudd," replied Geraint,

"These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest.
First, thou thyself, with damsel and with dwarf,
Shalt ride to Arthur's court and, coming there,
Crave pardon for that insult done the Queen,
And shalt abide her judgment on it; next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin.
These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die."
And Edyrn answered, "These things will I do,
For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride
Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall!"
And rising up he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily.
And, being young, he changed and came to loathe°
His crime of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at last
In the great battle fighting for the King.

But when the third day from the hunting-morn
Made a low splendor° in the world, and wings
Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim-yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise given
No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seemed on going the third day,
He would not leave her till her promise given—
To ride with him this morning to the court,
And there be made known to the stately Queen,

And there be wedded with all ceremony.
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had looked so mean.
For as a leaf in mid-November is
To what it was in mid-October, seemed
The dress that now she looked on to the dress
She looked on ere the coming of Geraint.
And still she looked, and still the terror grew
Of that strange bright and dreadful thing, a court,
All staring at her in her faded silk;
And softly to her own sweet heart she said:

"This noble prince who won our earldom back,
So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him!
Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so beholden to the prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seemed on going this third day,
To seek a second favor at his hands.
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eye dim and finger lame
Far liefer than so much discredit him."

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branched° and flowered with gold, a costly gift
Of her good mother, given her on the night
Before her birthday, three sad years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyrn sacked their house

And scattered all they had to all the winds;
For while the mother showed it, and the two
Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appeared so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they fled
With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold° had bought them bread.
And Edyrn's men had caught them in their flight,
And placed them in this ruin; and she wished
The prince had found her in her ancient home;
Then let her fancy flit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she knew;
And last bethought her how she used to watch,
Near that old home, a pool of golden carp;
And one was patched and blurred and lustreless
Among his burnished brethren of the pool;
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and these to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again,
And dreamt herself° was such a faded form
Among her burnished sisters of the pool.
But this was in the garden of a king,
And though she lay dark in the pool she knew
That all was bright; that all about were birds
Of sunny plume in gilded trellis-work;
That all the turf was rich in plots that looked
Each like a garnet or a turkis° in it;
And lords and ladies of the high court went
In silver tissue talking things of state;
And children of the King in cloth of gold

Glanced at the doors or gamboled down the walks.
And while she thought, "They will not see me," came
A stately queen whose name was Guinevere,
And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, "If we have fish at all
Let them be gold; and charge the gardeners now
To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen° that it die."
And therewithal one came and seized on her,
And Enid started waking, with her heart
All overshadowed by the foolish dream,
And lo! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake; and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly:

"See here, my child, how fresh the colors look,
How fast they hold, like colors of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the wave.
Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow:
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know it."

And Enid looked, but, all confused at first,
Could scarce divide it from her foolish dream.
Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answered, "Yea, I know it; your good gift,
So sadly lost on that unhappy night;

Your own good gift!" "Yea, surely," said the dame,
"And gladly given again this happy morn.
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol through the town, and everywhere
He found the sack and plunder of our house
All scattered through the houses of the town,
And gave command that all which once was ours
Should now be ours again; and yester-eve,
While ye were talking sweetly with your prince,
Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeking favor of us,
Because we have our earldom back again.
And yester-eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn.
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?
For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have yours,
And, howsoever patient, Yniol his.
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare, and page,
And maid, and squire, and seneschal,
And pastime both of hawk and hound, and all
That appertains to noble maintenance.°
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house;
But since our fortune swerved from sun to shade,
And all through that young traitor, cruel need
Constrained us, but a better time has come.
So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a prince's bride;

For though ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And though I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old.
And should some great court-lady say, the prince
Hath picked a ragged-robin° from the hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the court,
Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might shame the prince
To whom we are beholden; but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, though they sought
Through all the provinces like those of old°
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her match."

Here ceased the kindly mother out of breath,
And Enid listened brightening as she lay;
Then, as the white and glittering star of morn
Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed herself,
Helped by the mother's careful hand and eye,
Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown;
Who, after, turned her daughter round, and said
She never yet had seen her half so fair;
And called her like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion° made by glamour out of flowers,
And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelaun,°
Flur, for whose love the Roman Cæsar first

Invaded Britain: "But we beat him back,
As this great prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him with joy.
And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and wild;
But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift and gay among the gay."

But while the women thus rejoiced, Geraint
Woke where he slept in the high hall, and called
For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well beseem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answered: "Earl, entreat her by my love,
Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk."
Yniol with that hard message went; it fell
Like flaws° in summer laying lusty corn;
For Enid, all abashed she knew not why,
Dare not to glance at her good mother's face,
But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping her,
Laid from her limbs the costly-broidered gift,
And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended. Never man rejoiced°
More than Geraint to greet her thus attired;
And glancing all at once as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,

Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall,
But rested with her sweet face satisfied;
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow,
Her by both hands he caught, and sweetly said:

"O my new mother, be not wroth or grieved
At thy new son, for my petition to her.
When late I left Caerleon, our great Queen,
In words whose echo lasts, they were so sweet,
Made promise that, whatever bride I brought,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in heaven.
Thereafter, when I reached this ruined hall,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate,
I vowed that, could I gain her, our fair Queen,
No hand but hers, should make your Enid burst
Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought perhaps,
That service done so graciously would bind
The two together; fain I would the two
Should love each other. How can Enid find
A nobler friend? Another thought was mine:
I came among you here so suddenly
That though her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I was loved,
I doubted whether daughter's tenderness,
Or easy nature, might not let itself
Be moulded by your wishes for her weal;
Or whether some false sense in her own self
Of my contrasting brightness overbore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hall,
And such a sense might make her long for court

And all its perilous glories; and I thought,
That could I some way prove such force in her
Linked with such love for me that at a word,
No reason given her, she could cast aside
A splendor dear to women, new to her,
And therefore dearer; or if not so new,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted usage; then I felt
That I could rest, a rock in ebbs and flows,
Fixt on her faith. Now, therefore, I do rest,
A prophet certain of my prophecy,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us. Grant me pardon for my thoughts;
And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some gaudy-day,°
When your fair child shall wear your costly gift
Beside your own warm hearth, with, on her knees,
Who knows? another gift of the high God,
Which, maybe, shall have learned to lisp you thanks."

He spoke; the mother smiled, but half in tears,
Then brought a mantle down and wrapt her in it,
And claspt and kissed her, and they rode away.

Now thrice that morning Guinevere had climbed
The giant tower, from whose high crest, they say,
Man saw the goodly hills of Somerset,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea;°
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea

Looked the fair Queen, but up the vale of Usk,
By the flat meadow, till she saw them come;
And then descending met them at the gates,
Embraced her with all welcome as a friend,
And did her honor as the prince's bride,
And clothed her for her bridals like the sun;
And all that week was old Caerleon gay,
For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
They twain were wedded with all ceremony.

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide.
But Enid ever kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,
And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as himself
Had told her, and their coming to the court.

And now this morning when he said to her,
"Put on your worst and meanest dress," she found
And took it, and arrayed herself therein.

GERAINT AND ENID

O PURBLIND° race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge° a lifelong trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true;
Here, through the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach
That other where we see° as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth
That morning, when they both had got to horse,
Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart
Which, if he spoke at all, would break perforce
Upon a head so dear in thunder, said:
"Not at my side. I charge thee ride before,
Ever a good way on before; and this
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word!" and Enid was aghast;
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,
When crying out, "Effeminate° as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be iron;" he loosed a mighty purse,
Hung at his belt, and hurled it toward the squire.
So the last sight that Enid had of home

Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown
With gold and scattered coinage, and the squire
Chafing his shoulder. Then he cried again,
"To the wilds!" and Enid leading down the tracks
Through which he bade her lead him on, they past
The marches,° and by bandit-haunted holds,
Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hern,
And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode.
Round was their pace at first, but slackened soon.
A stranger meeting them had surely thought,
They rode so slowly and they looked so pale,
That each had suffered some exceeding wrong.
For he was ever saying to himself,
"O, I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To dress her beautifully and keep her true"—
And there he broke the sentence in his heart
Abruptly, as a man upon his tongue
May break it when his passion masters him.
And she was ever praying the sweet heavens
To save her dear lord whole from any wound.
And ever in her mind she cast about
For that unnoticed failing in herself
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold;
Till the great plover's° human whistle amazed
Her heart, and glancing round the waste she feared
In every wavering break an ambuscade;

Then thought again, "If there be such in me,°
I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it."

But when the fourth part of the day was gone,
Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly armed, behind a rock
In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all;
And heard one crying to his fellow, "Look,
Here comes a laggard hanging down his head,
Who seems no bolder than a beaten hound;
Come, we will slay him and will have his horse
And armor, and his damsel shall be ours."

Then Enid pondered in her heart, and said:
"I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all their caitiff talk;
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his dear hand had I die
Than that my lord should suffer loss or shame."

Then she went back some paces of return,
Met his full frown timidly firm, and said:
"My lord, I saw three bandits by the rock
Waiting to fall on you, and heard them boast
That they would slay you, and possess your horse
And armor, and your damsel should be theirs."

He made a wrathful answer: "Did I wish°
Your warning or your silence? one command
I laid upon you, not to speak to me,
And thus ye keep it! Well then, look—for now,
Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigor is not lost."

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit three.
And at the midmost charging, Prince Geraint
Drave the long spear a cubit through his breast
And out beyond; and then against his brace
Of comrades, each of whom had broken on him
A lance that splintered like an icicle,
Swung from his brand a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunned the twain
Or slew them, and dismounting, like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying him,
Stript from the three dead wolves° of woman born
The three gay suits of armor which they wore,
And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armor on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you;" and she drove them through the waste.

He followed nearer; ruth began to work
Against his anger in him, while he watched

The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on. He fain had spoken to her,
And loosed in words of sudden fire the wrath
And smouldered wrong that burnt him all within;
But evermore it seemed an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her dead
Than to cry "Halt," and to her own bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty:
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth the more
That she *could* speak whom his own ear had heard
Call herself false, and suffering thus he made
Minutes an age; but in scarce longer time
Than at Caerleon the full-tided Usk,
Before he turn to fall seaward again,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade° of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn-shafted oaks,
Three other horsemen waiting, wholly armed,
Whereof one seemed far larger than her lord,
And shook her pulses, crying, "Look, a prize!
Three horses and three goodly suits of arms,
And all in charge of whom? a girl! set on."°
"Nay," said the second, "yonder comes a knight."
The third, "A craven; how he hangs his head!"
The giant answered merrily, "Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon him!"

And Enid pondered in her heart and said:
"I will abide the coming of my lord,

And I will tell him all their villainy.
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unawares.
I needs must disobey him for his good;
How should I dare obey him to his harm?
Needs must I speak, and though he kill me for it,
I save a life dearer to me than mine."

And she abode his coming, and said to him
With timid firmness, "Have I leave to speak?"
He said, "Ye take it, speaking," and she spoke:

"There lurk three villains yonder in the wood,
And each of them is wholly armed, and one
Is larger-limbed than you are, and they say
That they will fall upon you while ye pass."

To which he flung a wrathful answer back:
"And if there were an hundred in the wood,
And every man were larger-limbed than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey° me. Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man."

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combat, only breathe
Short fits° of prayer, at every stroke a breath.
And he she dreaded most bare down upon him.
Aimed at the helm, his lance erred; but Geraint's,
A little in the late encounter strained,

Struck through the bulky bandit's corselet home,
And then brake short, and down his enemy rolled,
And there lay still; as he that tells the tale
Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore-cliff's windy walls° to the beach,
And there lie still, and yet the sapling grew;
So lay the man transfixt. His craven pair
Of comrades making slowlier at the prince,
When now they saw their bulwark fallen, stood;
On whom the victor, to confound them more,
Spurred with his terrible war-cry; for as one,
That listens° near a torrent mountain-brook,
All through the crash of the near cataract hears
The drumming thunder of the huger fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to hear
His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair who turned
Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an innocent.

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, picked the lance
That pleased him best, and drew from those dead wolves
Their three gay suits of armor, each from each,
And bound them on their horses, each on each,
And tied the bridle-reins of all the three

Together, and said to her, "Drive them on
Before you," and she drove them through the wood.

He followed nearer still. The pain she had
To keep them in the wild ways of the wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling arms,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her heart;
And they themselves, like creatures gently born
But into bad hands fallen, and now so long
By bandits groomed, pricked their light ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government.

So through the green gloom of the wood they past,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike° chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing in it;
And down a rocky pathway from the place
There came a fair-haired youth, that in his hand
Bare victual for the mowers; and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale.
Then, moving downward to the meadow ground,
He, when the fair-haired youth came by him, said,
"Friend, let her eat; the damsel is so faint."
"Yea, willingly," replied the youth; "and thou.

My lord, eat also, though the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowers;" then set down
His basket, and dismounting on the sward
They let the horses graze, and ate themselves.
And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with her lord's pleasure; but Geraint
Ate all the mowers' victual unawares,
And when he found all empty was amazed;
And "Boy," said he, "I have eaten all, but take
A horse and arms for guerdon;° choose the best."
He, reddening in extremity of delight,
"My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold."
"Ye will be all the wealthier," cried the prince.
"I take it as free gift, then," said the boy,
"Not guerdon; for myself can easily,
While your good damsel rests, return and fetch
Fresh victual for these mowers of our earl;
For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his; and I will tell him
How great a man thou art. He loves to know
When men of mark are in his territory;
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee costlier than with mowers' fare."

Then said Geraint: "I wish no better fare;
I never ate with angrier appetite
Than when I left your mowers dinnerless.
And into no earl's palace will I go.
I know, God knows, too much of palaces!

And if he want me, let him come to me.
But hire us some fair chamber for the night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us know."

"Yea, my kind lord," said the glad youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappeared,
Leading the horse, and they were left alone.

But when the prince had brought his errant° eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let them glance
At Enid, where she droopt. His own false doom,°
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he sighed;
Then with another humorous ruth° remarked
The lusty mowers laboring dinnerless,
And watched the sun blaze on the turning scythe,
And after nodded sleepily in the heat.
But she, remembering her old ruined hall,
And all the windy clamor of the daws
About her hollow turret, plucked the grass
There growing longest by the meadow's edge,
And into many a listless annulet,°
Now over, now beneath her marriage ring,
Wove and unwove it, till the boy returned
And told them of a chamber, and they went;
Where, after saying to her, "If ye will,

Call for the woman of the house," to which
She answered, "Thanks, my lord;" the two
remained
Apart by all the chamber's width, and mute
As creatures voiceless through the fault of birth,
Or two wild men supporters of a shield,°
Painted, who stare at open space, nor glance
The one at other, parted by the shield.

On a sudden, many a voice along the street,
And heel against the pavement echoing, burst
Their drowse; and either started while the door,
Pushed from without, drave backward to the
wall,
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
Her suitor in old years before Geraint
Entered, the wild lord of the place, Limours.°
He moving up with pliant courtliness
Greeted Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid-warmth of welcome and graspt
hand,
Found Enid with the corner of his eye,
And knew her sitting sad and solitary.
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly cheer
To feed the sudden guest, and sumptuously,
According to his fashion, bade the host
Call in what men soever were his friends,
And feast with these in honor of their earl;
"And care not for the cost; the cost is mine."

And wine and food were brought, and Earl Limours
Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word° and played upon it,
And made it of two colors; for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled him,
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets; thus he moved the prince
To laughter and his comrades to applause.
Then, when the prince was merry, asked Limours,
"Your leave, my lord, to cross the room, and speak
To your good damsel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?" "My free leave,"° he said;
"Get her to speak; she doth not speak to me."
Then rose Limours, and looking at his feet,
Like him who tries the bridge he fears may fail,
Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bowed at her side and uttered whisperingly:

"Enid, the pilot star° of my lone life,
Enid, my early and my only love,
Enid, the loss of whom hath turned me wild—
What chance is this? how is it I see you here?
Ye are in my power at last, are in my power.
Yet fear me not; I call mine own self wild,
But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heart of waste and wilderness.
I thought, but that your father came between,
In former days you saw me favorably.

And if it were so do not keep it back.
Make me a little happier; let me know it.
Owe you me nothing for a life half-lost?
Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you are.
And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, page or maid,
To serve you—doth he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quarrels,° yet I know
Though men may bicker with the things they love,
They would not make them laughable in all eyes,
Not while they loved them; and your wretched dress,
A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks
Your story, that this man loves you no more.°
Your beauty is no beauty to him now.
A common chance—right well I know it—palled—
For I know men; nor will ye win him back,
For the man's love once gone never returns.
But here is one who loves you as of old;
With more exceeding passion than of old.
Good, speak the word; my followers ring him round.
He sits unarmed; I hold a finger up;
They understand. Nay, I do not mean blood;
Nor need ye look so scared at what I say.
My malice is no deeper than a moat,
No stronger than a wall. There is the keep;°

He shall not cross us more; speak but the word.
Or speak it not; but then by Him that made me
The one true lover whom you ever owned,
I will make use of all the power I have.
O, pardon me! the madness of that hour
When first I parted from thee moves me yet."

At this the tender sound of his own voice
And sweet self-pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eyes moist; but Enid feared his eyes,
Moist as they were, wine-heated from the feast,
And answered with such craft as women use,
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That breaks upon them perilously, and said:

"Earl, if you love me as in former years,
And do not practise on me, come with morn,
And snatch me from him as by violence.
Leave me to-night; I am weary to the death."

Low at leave-taking, with his brandished plume
Brushing his instep, bowed the all-amorous earl,
And the stout prince bade him a loud good-night.
He moving homeward babbled to his men,
How Enid never loved a man but him,
Nor cared a broken egg-shell for her lord.
But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
Debating his command of silence given,
And that she now perforce must violate it,

Held commune with herself, and while she held
He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased
To find him yet unwounded after fight,
And hear him breathing low and equally.
Anon she rose and, stepping lightly, heaped
The pieces of his armor in one place,
All to be there against a sudden need;
Then dozed awhile herself, but, overtoiled
By that day's grief and travel, evermore
Seemed catching at a rootless thorn, and then
Went slipping down horrible precipices,
And strongly striking out her limbs awoke;
Then thought she heard the wild earl at the door,
With all his rout of ramdom followers,
Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her;
Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world
And glimmered on his armor in the room.
And once again she rose to look at it,
But touched it unawares; jangling, the casque
Fell, and he started up and stared at her.
Then breaking his command of silence given,
She told him all that Earl Limours had said,
Except the passage that he loved her not;
Nor left untold the craft herself had used,
But ended with apology so sweet,
Low-spoken, and of so few words, and seemed

So justified by that necessity,
That though he thought, "Was it for him she wept
In Devon?" he but gave a wrathful groan,
Saying, "Your sweet faces make good fellows fools
And traitors. Call the host and bid him bring
Charger and palfrey." So she glided out
Among the heavy breathings of the house,
And like a household spirit at the walls
Beat, till she woke the sleepers, and returned;
Then tending her rough lord, though all unasked,
In silence, did him service as a squire;
Till issuing armed he found the host and cried,
"Thy reckoning, friend?" and ere he learnt it, "Take
Five horses and their armors;" and the host,
Suddenly honest,° answered in amaze,
"My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one!"
"Ye will be all the wealthier," said the prince,
And then to Enid, "Forward! and to-day
I charge you, Enid, more especially,
What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
Or fancy—though I count it of small use
To charge you—that ye speak not but obey."

And Enid answered: "Yea, my lord, I know
Your wish and would obey; but, riding first,
I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
I see the danger which you cannot see.

Then not to give you warning, that seems hard,
Almost beyond me; yet I would obey."

"Yea so," said he, "do it; be not too wise,
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not all mismated with a yawning clown,
But one with arms to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams."

With that he turned and looked as keenly at her
As careful robins° eye the delver's toil;
And that within her which a wanton fool
Or hasty judger would have called her guilt
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall.
And Geraint looked and was not satisfied.

Then forward by a way which, beaten broad,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another earl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals called the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on.
Once she looked back, and when she saw him ride
More near by many a rood than yestermorn,
It wellnigh made her cheerful; till Geraint,
Waving an angry hand as who should say,
"Ye watch me," saddened all her heart again.
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,

The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker° in it.
Then, not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust.
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleased, and turning stood.
And in the moment after, wild Limours,
Borne on a black horse, like a thunder-cloud
Whose skirts are loosened by the breaking storm,
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dashed on Geraint, who closed with him, and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunned or dead,
And overthrew the next that followed him,
And blindly rushed on all the rout behind.
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanished panic-stricken, like a shoal
Of darting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes° at Camelot
Come slipping o'er their shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets° white in flower;

So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon° companions of the earl,
And left him lying in the public way;
So vanish friendships only made in wine.

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled Geraint,
Who saw the chargers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers. "Horse and man," he said,
"All of one mind and all right-honest friends!
Not a hoof left!° and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with arms;
I cannot steal or plunder, no, nor beg.
And so what say ye, shall we strip him there,
Your lover? has your palfrey heart enough
To bear his armor? shall we fast or dine?°
No?—then do thou, being right honest, pray
That we may meet the horsemen of Earl Doorm;
I too would still be honest." Thus he said;
And sadly gazing on her bridle-reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way.

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he learns it, and the loss
So pains him that he sickens nigh to death;
So fared it with Geraint, who, being pricked
In combat with the follower of Limours,
Bled underneath his armor secretly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife

What ailed him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye darkened and his helmet wagged;
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Though happily down on a bank of grass,
The prince, without a word, from his horse fell.

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bared her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swathed the hurt that drained her dear lord's life.
Then, after all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolation came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way.

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence
A woman weeping for her murdered mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower.
One took him for a victim of Earl Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous° pity on him.
Another hurrying past, a man-at-arms,
Rode on a mission to the bandit earl;
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
He drove the dust against her veilless eyes.
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm

Before an ever-fancied arrow, made
The long way smoke beneath him in his fear;
At which her palfrey whinnying lifted heel,
And scoured into the coppices and was lost,
While the great charger stood, grieved like a man.

But at the point of noon the huge Earl Doorm,
Broad-faced with under-fringe of russet beard,
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up;
But ere he came, like one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, "What, is he dead?"
"No, no, not dead!" she answered in all haste.
"Would some of your kind people take him up,
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead."

Then said Earl Doorm: "Well, if he be not dead,
Why wail ye for him thus? ye seem a child.
And be he dead, I count you for a fool;
Your wailing will not quicken him; dead or not,
Ye mar a comely face with idiot tears.
Yet, since the face *is* comely—some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall.
And if he live, we will have him of our band;
And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him. See ye take the charger too,
A noble one."

He spake and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
Seems to be plucked at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling; so the ruffians growled,
Fearing to lose, and all for a dead man,
Their chance of booty from the morning's raid,
Yet raised and laid him on a litter-bier,°
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded; laid him on it
All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doorm—
His gentle charger following him unled—
And cast him and the bier in which he lay
Down on an oaken settle° in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join
Their luckier mates, but growling as before,
And cursing their lost time, and the dead man,
And their own earl, and their own souls, and her.
They might as well have blest her; she was deaf
To blessing or to cursing save from one.

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord
There in the naked hall, propping his head,
And chafing his pale hands, and calling to him,
Till at the last he wakened from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping his head,
And chafing his faint hands, and calling to him;

And felt the warm tears falling on his face,
And said to his own heart, "She weeps for me;"
And yet lay still, and feigned himself as dead,
That he might prove her to the uttermost,
And say to his own heart, "She weeps for me."

But in the falling afternoon returned
The huge Earl Doorm with plunder to the hall.
His lusty spearmen followed him with noise:
Each hurling down a heap of things that rang
Against the pavement, cast his lance aside,
And doffed his helm; and then there fluttered in,
Half-bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, dressed in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen; and Earl Doorm
Struck with a knife's haft hard against the board,
And called for flesh and wine to feed his spears.
And men brought in whole hogs and quarter beeves,
And all the hall was dim with steam of flesh.
And none spake word, but all sat down at once,
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them feed;
Till Enid shrank far back into herself,
To shun the wild ways of the lawless tribe.
But when Earl Doorm had eaten all he would,
He rolled his eyes about the hall, and found
A damsel drooping in a corner of it.
Then he remembered her and how she wept,

And out of her there came a power upon him;
And rising on the sudden he said: "Eat!
I never yet beheld a thing so pale.
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you weep.
Eat! Look yourself. Good luck had your good man,
For were I dead who is it would weep for me?
Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
Have I beheld a lily like yourself.
And so there lived some color in your cheek,
There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove.
But listen to me, and by me be ruled,
And I will do the thing I have not done,
For ye shall share my earldom with me, girl,
And we will live like two birds in one nest,
And I will fetch you forage from all fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will."

He spoke; the brawny spearman° let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallowed piece, and turning stared;
While some, whose souls the old serpent° long had drawn
Down, as the worm° draws in the withered leaf
And makes it earth, hissed each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded—women they,
Women, or what had been those gracious things,
But now desired the humbling of their best,
Yea, would have helped him to it; and all at once

They hated her, who took no thought of them,
But answered in low voice, her meek head yet
Drooping, "I pray you of your courtesy,
He being as he is, to let me be."

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graciously,
Assumed that she had thanked him, adding,
"Yea,
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine."

She answered meekly, "How should I be glad
Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord arise and look upon me?"

Here the huge earl cried out upon her talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing; suddenly seized on her,
And bare her by main violence to the board,
And thrust the dish before her, crying, "Eat."

"No, no," said Enid, vext, "I will not eat
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me." "Drink, then," he answered.
"Here!"—
And filled a horn with wine and held it to her,—
"Lo! I, myself, when flushed with fight or hot,
God's curse, with anger—often I myself,
Before I well have drunken, scarce can eat;
Drink therefore, and the wine will change your
will."

"Not so," she cried, "by Heaven, I will not drink
Till my dear lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me; and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die."

At this he turned all red and paced his hall,
Now gnawed his under, now his upper lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last:
"Girl, for I see ye scorn my courtesies,
Take warning; yonder man is surely dead,
And I compel all creatures to my will.
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wail for one
Who put your beauty to this flout and scorn
By dressing it in rags? Amazed am I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus; cross me no more.
At least put off to please me this poor gown,
This silken rag, this beggar-woman's weed.°
I love that beauty should go beautifully;
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully?
Rise therefore; robe yourself in this; obey."

He spoke, and one among his gentlewomen
Displayed a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea° the lovely blue
Played into green, and thicker down the front
With jewels than the sward with drops of dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,

And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung; so thickly shone the gems.

But Enid answered, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With lifelong injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come; and Enid said:

"In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall;
In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
And there the Queen arrayed me like the sun;
In this poor gown he bade me clothe myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honor, where no honor can be gained;
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself arise a living man,
And bid me cast it. I have griefs enough;
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be.
I never loved, can never love but him.
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
He being as he is, to let me be."

Then strode the brute earl up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth;
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, "I count it of no more avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentle with you;
Take my salute," unknightly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword, . . .

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, "He had not dared to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,"
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming through the wood.

This heard Geraint, and grasping at his sword,—
It lay beside him in the hollow shield,—
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shore° through the swarthy neck, and like a ball
The russet-bearded head rolled on the floor.
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead.
And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise, and fled
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said:

"Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man,
Done you more wrong; we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thrice your own.
Henceforward I will rather die than doubt.
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, though mine own ears heard you yester-morn—
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true wife;
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it.

I do believe yourself against yourself,
And will henceforward rather die than doubt."

And Enid could not say one tender word,
She felt so blunt and stupid at the heart.
She only prayed him, "Fly, they will return
And slay you; fly, your charger is without,
My palfrey lost." "Then, Enid, shall you ride
Behind me." "Yea," said Enid, "let us go."
And moving out they found the stately horse,
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neighed with all gladness as they came, and stooped
With a low whinny toward the pair; and she
Kissed the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also; then Geraint upon the horse
Mounted, and reached a hand, and on his foot
She set her own and climbed; he turned his face
And kissed her climbing, and she cast her arms
About him, and at once they rode away.

And never yet,° since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers° the first roses blew,
Came purer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived through her who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers again. She did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist°
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green

Before the useful trouble of the rain.
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes
As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Arthur's court, who laid his lance
In rest and made as if to fall upon him.
Then, fearing for his hurt and loss of blood,
She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,
Shrieked to the stranger, "Slay not a dead man!"
"The voice of Enid," said the knight; but she,
Beholding it was Edyrn, son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and shrieked again,
"O cousin, slay not him who gave you life."
And Edyrn moving frankly forward spake:
"My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love;
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm;
And fear not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
Who love you, prince, with something of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us.
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to hell,
By overthrowing° me you threw me higher.
Now, made a knight of Arthur's Table Round.
And since I knew this earl when I myself
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm—
The King is close behind me—bidding him
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King."

"He hears the judgment of the King of kings,"
Cried the wan prince; "and lo, the powers of Doorm
Are scattered!" and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound and knoll,
Were men and women staring and aghast,
While some yet fled; and then he plainlier told
How the huge earl lay slain within his hall.
But when the knight besought him, "Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear
Speak what has chanced; ye surely have endured
Strange chances here alone;" that other flushed,
And hung his head, and halted in reply,
Fearing the mild face of the blameless King,
And after madness acted question asked;
Till Edyrn crying, "If ye will not go
To Arthur, then will Arthur come to you,"
"Enough," he said, "I follow," and they went.
But Enid in their going had two fears,
One from the bandit scattered in the field,
And one from Edyrn. Every now and then,
When Edyrn reined his charger at her side,
She shrank a little. In a hollow land,°
From which old fires have broken, men may fear
Fresh fire and ruin. He, perceiving, said:

"Fair and dear cousin, you that most had cause
To fear me, fear no longer, I am changed.
Yourself were first the blameless cause to make
My nature's prideful sparkle in the blood

Break into furious flame; being repulsed
By Yniol and yourself, I schemed and wrought
Until I overturned him; then set up—
With one main purpose° ever at my heart—
My haughty jousts, and took a paramour;
Did her mock-honor as the fairest fair,
And, toppling over all antagonism,
So waxed in pride that I believed myself
Unconquerable, for I was wellnigh mad;
And, but for my main purpose in these jousts,
I should have slain your father, seized yourself.
I lived in hope that sometime you would come
To these my lists with him whom best you loved,
And there, poor cousin, with your meek blue eyes,
The truest eyes that ever answered Heaven,°
Behold me overturn and trample on him.
Then, had you cried, or knelt, or prayed to me,
I should not less have killed him. And you came,—
But once you came,—and with your own true eyes
Beheld the man you loved—I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him—overthrow
My proud self, and my purpose three years old,
And set his foot upon me, and give me life.
There was I broken down, there was I saved;
Though thence I rode all-shamed, hating the life
He gave me, meaning to be rid of it.
And all the penance the Queen laid upon me
Was but to rest awhile within her court;

Where first as sullen as a beast new-caged,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf,
Because I knew my deeds were known, I found,
Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence,
Manners so kind, yet stately, such a grace
Of tenderest courtesy, that I began
To glance behind me at my former life,
And find that it had been the wolf's indeed.
And oft I talked with Dubric, the high saint,
Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness
Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.
And you were often there about the Queen,
But saw me not, or marked not if you saw;
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed;
And fear not, cousin, I am changed indeed."

He spoke, and Enid easily believed,
Like simple noble natures, credulous
Of what they long for, good in friend or foe,
There most in those who most have done them ill.
And when they reached the camp the King himself
Advanced to greet them, and beholding her
Though pale, yet happy, asked her not a word,
But went apart with Edyrn, whom he held
In converse for a little, and returned,
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from horse,

And kissed her with all pureness, brother-like,
And showed an empty tent allotted her,
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
Pass into it, turned to the prince, and said:

"Prince, when of late ye prayed me for my leave
To move to your own land and there defend
Your marches, I was pricked with some reproof,
As one that let foul wrong stagnate and be,
By having looked too much through alien eyes,
And wrought too long with delegated hands,°
Not used mine own; but now behold me come
To cleanse this common sewer of all my realm,
With Edyrn and with others. Have ye looked
At Edyrn? have ye seen how nobly changed?
This work of his is great and wonderful.
His very face with change of heart is changed.
The world will not believe a man repents;
And this wise world of ours is mainly right.
Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
Both grace and will to pick the vicious quitch°
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
And make all clean, and plant himself afresh.
Edyrn has done it, weeding all his heart
As I will weed this land before I go.
I, therefore, made him of our Table Round,
Not rashly, but have proved him every way
One of our noblest, our most valorous,
Sanest and most obedient; and indeed

This work of Edyrn, wrought upon himself
After a life of violence, seems to me
A thousand-fold more great and wonderful
Than if some knight of mine, risking his life,
My subject with my subjects under him,
Should make an onslaught single on a realm
Of robbers, though he slew them one by one,
And were himself nigh wounded to the death."

So spake the King; low bowed the prince, and felt
His work was neither great nor wonderful,
And past to Enid's tent; and thither came
The King's own leech to look into his hurt;
And Enid tended on him there; and there
Her constant motion round him, and the breath
Of her sweet tendence hovering over him,
Filled all the genial courses of his blood
With deeper and with ever deeper love,
As the Southwest that blowing Bala lake°
Fills all the sacred Dee. So past the days.

But while Geraint lay healing of his hurt,
The blameless King went forth and cast his eyes
On each of all whom Uther left in charge
Long since, to guard the justice of the King.
He looked and found them wanting; and as now
Men weed the White Horse° on the Berkshire hills,

To keep him bright and clean as heretofore,
He rooted out the slothful officer
Or guilty, which for bribe had winked at wrong,
And in their chairs set up a stronger race
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand men
To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Cleared the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed the land.

Then, when Geraint was whole again, they past
With Arthur to Caerleon upon Usk.
There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
And clothed her in apparel like the day.
And though Geraint could never take again
That comfort from their converse which he took
Before the Queen's fair name was breathed upon,
He rested well content that all was well.
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land.
And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whisper° died;
And being ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They called him the great prince and man of men.
But Enid, whom her ladies loved to call

Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good; and in their halls arose
The cry of children, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be; nor did he doubt her more,
But rested in her fealty till he crowned
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King.°

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

ELAINE the fair,° Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,°
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;°
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure° fashioned for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazoned on the shield
In their own tinct,° and added, of her wit,°
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in her nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father, climbed
That eastern tower, and entering barred her door,
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guessed a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh,
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle,°
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot—
And ah, God's mercy, what a stroke was there!

And here a thrust that might have killed, but God
Broke the strong lance, and rolled his enemy down,
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not even his name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordained, and by that name
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crowned him king,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonnesse,°
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.°
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side;
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together, but their names were lost;
And each had slain his brother at a blow;
And down they fell and made the glen abhorred.
And there they lay till all their bones were bleached,
And lichened into color with the crags.
And he that once was king had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front and four aside.
And Arthur came, and laboring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crowned skeleton, and the skull

Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Rolled into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn.
And down the shingly scaur° he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, "Lo, thou likewise shalt be king."

Thereafter, when a king, he had the gems
Plucked from the crown, and showed them to his knights
Saying: "These jewels, whereupon I chanced
Divinely,° are the kingdom's, not the King's—
For public use. Henceforward let there be,
Once every year, a joust for one of these;
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land
Hereafter, which God hinder!" Thus he spoke.
And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still°
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
With purpose to present them to the Queen
When all were won; but, meaning all at once
To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
Hard on the river nigh the place which now
Is this world's hugest,° let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake—for she had been sick—to Guinevere:
"Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
To these fair jousts?" "Yea, lord," she said, "ye know it."
"Then will ye miss," he answered, "the great deeds
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on." And the Queen
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.
He, thinking that he read her meaning there,
"Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
Than many diamonds," yielded; and a heart
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen—
However much he yearned to make complete
The tale of diamonds for his destined boon—
Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
"Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
And lets° me from the saddle;" and the King
Glanced first° at him, then her, and went his way.
No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

"To blame,° my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!

Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights
Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
Will murmur, 'Lo the shameless ones, who take
Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!'"
Then Lancelot, vext at having lied in vain:°
"Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer when ye loved me first.
Then of the crowd ye took no more account
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
Them surely can I silence with all ease.
But now my royal worship is allowed°
Of all men; many a bard, without offence,
Has linked our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
The pearl of beauty; and our knights at feast
Have pledged us in this union, while the King
Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
Now weary of my service and devoir,
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?"

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
"Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless° King,
That passionate perfection, my good lord—
But who can gaze upon the sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,

He cares not for me. Only here to-day
There gleamed a vague suspicion in his eyes;
Some meddling rogue has tampered with him—else
Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,°
To make them like himself; but, friend, to me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all.
For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
The low sun makes the color. I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond.
And therefore hear my words: go to the jousts;
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
When sweetest; and the vermin voices° here
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they sting."

Then answered Lancelot, the chief of knights:
"And with what face, after my pretext made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a king who honors° his own word
As if it were his God's?"

"Yea," said the Queen,
"A moral child° without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me; but listen to me,
If I must find you wit. We hear it said
That men go down before your spear at a touch,
But knowing you are Lancelot; your great name,

This conquers. Hide it therefore; go unknown.
Win! by this kiss you will; and our true King
Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
As all for glory; for to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
No keener hunter after glory breathes.
He loves it in his knights more than himself;
They prove to him his work.° Win and return."

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known,
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,
Chose the green path that showed the rarer foot
And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
Till as he traced a faintly-shadowed track,
That all in loops and links among the dales
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
Who let him into lodging and disarmed.
And Lancelot marvelled at the wordless man;
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
Moving to meet him in the castle court;
And close behind them stept the lily maid
Elaine,° his daughter; mother of the house
There was not. Some light jest among them rose
With laughter dying down as the great knight

Approached them; then the Lord of Astolat:
"Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
Livest between the lips?° for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.
Him have I seen; the rest, his Table Round,
Known as they are, to me they are unknown."

Then answered Lancelot, the chief of knights:
"Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not;
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—
I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine."

Then said the Lord of Astolat: "Here is Torre's:
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre,
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
His ye can have." Then added plain Sir Torre,
"Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it."
Here laughed the father saying: "Fie, Sir Churl,
Is that an answer for a noble knight?
Allow him! but Lavaine,° my younger here,
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,

And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before."

"Nay, father, nay, good father, shame me not
Before this noble knight," said young Lavaine,
"For nothing. Surely I but played on Torre,
He seemed so sullen, vext he could not go;
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt
That some one put this diamond in her hand,
And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle-well, belike; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it—
But all was jest and joke among ourselves—
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight.
Win shall I not, but do my best to win;
Young as I am, yet would I do my best."

"So ye will grace me," answered Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, "with your fellowship
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend;
And you shall win this diamond,—as I hear,
It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will."
"A fair large diamond," added plain Sir Torre,
"Such be for queens, and not for simple maids."
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flushed slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus returned:
"If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like."

He spoke and ceased; the lily maid Elaine,
Won by the mellow voice before she looked,
Lifted her eyes and read his lineaments.
The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,
In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marred his face,° and marked it ere his time.
Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it; but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.
Marred as he was, he seemed the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marred, of more than twice her years,
Seamed with an ancient sword-cut on the cheek,
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind;
Whom they with meats and vintage of their best
And talk and minstrel melody entertained.
And much they asked of court and Table Round,
And ever well and readily answered he;
But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,°
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the baron that, ten years before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
"He learnt and warned me of their fierce design
Against my house, and him they caught and maimed;
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods
By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill."°

"O, there, great lord, doubtless," Lavaine said, rapt°
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
Toward greatness in its elder, "you have fought.
O, tell us—for we live apart—you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars." And Lancelot spoke
And answered him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long

Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;°
And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war
That thundered in and out the gloomy skirts
Of Celidon the forest; and again
By Castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carved of one emerald centered in a sun
Of silver rays, that lightened as he breathed;
And at Caerleon had he helped his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild White Horse
Set every gilded parapet shuddering;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
Where many a heathen fell; "And on the mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legion crying Christ and him,
And brake them; and I saw him, after, stand
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,
'They are broken, they are broken!' for the King,
However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts—
For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs,
Saying his knights are better men than he—

Yet in this heathen war the fire of God°
Fills him. I never saw his like; there lives
No greater leader."

While he uttered this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
"Save your great self, fair lord;" and when he fell
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
She still took note that when the living smile
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature; and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely through all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and color of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep,
Till rathe° she rose, half-cheated in the thought
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.
First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating.

Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
"This shield, my friend, where is it?" and Lavaine
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
There to his proud horse Lancelot turned, and smoothed
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew
Nearer and stood. He looked, and, more amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dreamed she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, though he greeted her, she stood
Rapt° on his face as if it were a god's.
Suddenly flashed on her a wild desire
That he should wear her favor at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
"Fair lord, whose name I know not—noble it is,
I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
My favor at this tourney?" "Nay," said he,
"Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favor of any lady in the lists.
Such is my wont, as those who know me know."
"Yea, so," she answered; "then in wearing mine
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
That those who know should know you." And he turned
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answered: "True, my child.
Well, I will wear it; fetch it out to me.

. . . she staid a minute, . . .
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield

What is it?" and she told him, "A red sleeve
Broidered with pearls," and brought it. Then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile
Saying, "I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living," and the blood
Sprang to her face and filled her with delight;
But left her all the paler when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet un-blazoned shield,
His brother's, which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
"Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield
In keeping till I come." "A grace to me,"
She answered, "twice to-day. I am your squire!"
Whereat Lavaine said laughingly: "Lily maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your color back;
Once, twice, and thrice. Now get you hence to bed:"
So kissed her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
And thus they moved away. She staid a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there—
Her bright hair blown about the serious face
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss—
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
In silence, while she watched their arms far-off
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
Then to her tower she climbed, and took the shield,
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
A hermit,° who had prayed, labored and prayed,
And ever laboring had scooped himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
Of massive columns, like a shore-cliff cave,
And cells and chambers. All were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.°
And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,
And shot red fire and shadows through the cave,
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away.
Then Lancelot saying, "Hear, but hold my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,"
Abashed Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
But left him leave to stammer, "Is it indeed?"
And after muttering, "The great Lancelot,"
At last he got his breath and answered: "One,
One have I seen—that other, our liege lord,
The dread Pendragon,° Britain's King of kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there—then were I stricken blind

That minute I might say that I had seen."

So spake Lavaine, and when they reached the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run through the peopled gallery which half round
Lay like a rainbow° fallen upon the grass,
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
And from the carven-work behind him crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make
Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
Through knots and loops and folds innumerable
Fled ever through the woodwork, till they found
The new design wherein they lost themselves,
Yet with all ease,° so tender was the work;
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.°

Then Lancelot answered young Lavaine and said:
"Me you call great; mine is the firmer seat,
The truer lance; but there is many a youth
Now crescent,° who will come to all I am
And overcome it; and in me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great.
There is the man." And Lavaine gaped upon him

As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
They that assailed, and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock that a man far-off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard-earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurled into it
Against the stronger. Little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stranger knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, "Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force alone—
The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?" "When has Lancelot worn
Favor of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we that know him know."
"How then? who then?" a fury seized them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couched their spears and pricked their steeds, and thus,

Their plumes driven backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave° in the wide North Sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark
And him that helms it; so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Pricked sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced through his side, and there snapt and remained.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully.
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party,—though it seemed half-miracle
To those he fought with,—drave his kith and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the lists,
Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew
Proclaiming his the prize who wore the sleeve
Of scarlet and the pearls; and all the knights,
His party, cried, "Advance and take thy prize
The diamond;" but he answered: "Diamond me
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!

Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not."

He spoke, and vanished suddenly from the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, "Draw the lance-head."
"Ah, my sweet lord Sir Lancelot," said Lavaine,
"I dread me, if I draw it, you will die."
But he, "I die already with it; draw—
Draw,"—and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swooned away.
Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
There stanched his wound; and there, in daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wild world's rumor by the grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and West,
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,
"Lo, Sire, our knight, through whom we won the day,

Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize
Untaken, crying that his prize is death."
"Heaven hinder," said the King, "that such an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
He seemed to me another Lancelot—
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot—
He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore rise,
O Gawain,° and ride forth and find the knight.
Wounded and wearied, needs must he be near.
I charge you that you get at once to horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given;
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him
No customary honor; since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is,° and how he fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye find."

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took
And gave the diamond. Then from where he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a prince
In the mid might and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed the Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint,
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal

Sir Modred's° brother, and the child of Lot,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
The banquet and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got his horse and went;
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Past, thinking, "Is it Lancelot who hath come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And ridden away to die?" So feared the King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, returned.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing asked,
"Love, are you yet so sick?" "Nay, lord," she said.
"And where is Lancelot?" Then the Queen amazed,
"Was he not with you? won he not your prize?"
"Nay, but one like him." "Why, that like was he."
And when the King demanded how she knew,
Said: "Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
That men went down before his spear at a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
Conquered; and therefore would he hide his name
From all men, even the King, and to this end
Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,

That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
If his old prowess were in aught decayed;
And added, 'Our true Arthur,° when he learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory.' "

Then replied the King:
"Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear° in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter; now remains
But little cause for laughter. His own kin—
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this!—
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
So that he went sore wounded from the field.
Yet good news too; for goodly hopes are mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, broidered with great pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift."

"Yea, lord," she said,
"Thy hopes are mine," and saying that, she choked,
And sharply turned about to hide her face,

Past to her chamber, and there flung herself
Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,
And clenched her fingers till they bit the palm,
And shrieked out "Traitor!"° to the unhearing wall,
Then flashed into wild tears, and rose again,
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while through all the region round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
Touched at all points except the poplar grove.
And came at last, though late, to Astolat;
Whom glittering in enamelled arms the maid
Glanced at, and cried, "What news from Camelot, lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve?" "He won."
"I knew it," she said. "But parted from the jousts
Hurt in the side;" whereat she caught her breath.
Through her own side she felt the sharp lance go.
Thereon she smote her hand; wellnigh she swooned.
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
The victor, but had ridden a random round
To seek him, and had wearied of the search.
To whom the Lord of Astolat: "Bide with us.

And ride no more at random, noble prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;
This will he send or come for. Furthermore,
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear." To this the courteous prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,°
And staid; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine;
Where could be found face daintier? then her shape
From forehead down to foot, perfect—again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turned.
"Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!"
And oft they met among the garden yews,
And there he set himself to play upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and low smiles, and golden eloquence
And amorous adulation, till the maid
Rebelled against it, saying to him: "Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your King,
And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
To all the winds?" "Nay, by mine head," said he,
"I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;
But an ye will it let me see the shield."

And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crowned with gold,
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mocked:
"Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!"
"And right was I," she answered merrily, "I,
Who dreamed my knight the greatest knight of all."
"And if I dreamed," said Gawain, "that you love
This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye know it!
Speak therefore; shall I waste myself in vain?"
Full simple was her answer: "What know I?
My brethren have been all my fellowship;
And I, when often they have talked of love,
Wished it had been my mother, for they talked,
Meseemed, of what they knew not; so myself—
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
I know there is none other I can love."
"Yea, by God's death," said he, "ye love him well,
But would not, knew ye what all others know,
And whom he loves." "So be it," cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved away;
But he pursued her, calling, "Stay a little!
One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve.

Would he break faith with one I may not name?
Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
Nay—like enow. Why then, far be it from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
My quest with you; the diamond also—here!
For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he love or not,
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
May meet at court hereafter; there, I think,
So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other."

Then he gave,
And slightly kissed the hand to which he gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told the King
What the King knew, "Sir Lancelot is the knight."
And added, "Sire, my liege, so much I learnt,
But failed to find him, though I rode all round
The region; but I lighted on the maid

Whose sleeve he wore. She loves him; and to her,
Deeming our courtesy° is the truest law,
I gave the diamond. She will render it;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place."

The seldom-frowning King frowned, and replied,
"Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings."

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,
Lingered that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair,° strode off, and buzzed abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were pricked at once, all tongues were loosed:
"The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat."
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoomed her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it before,

But sorrowing Lancelot should have stooped so low,
Marred her friend's aim° with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared;
Till even the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crushed the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said:
"Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?"
"Nay," said he "surely." "Wherefore, let me hence,"
She answered, "and find out our dear Lavaine."
"Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine.
Bide," answered he: "we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other." "Ay," she said,
"And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, whereso'er he be,

And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud prince who left the quest to me.
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for the lack of gentle maiden's aid.
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know,
When these have worn their tokens. Let me hence,
I pray you." Then her father nodding said:
"Ay, ay, the diamond. Wit ye well, my child,
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest. Yea, and you must give it—
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's—
Nay, I mean nothing; so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go."

Lightly, her suit allowed, she slipt away,
And while she made her ready for her ride
Her father's latest word hummed in her ear,
"Being so very wilful you must go,"
And changed itself and echoed in her heart,
"Being so very wilful you must die."
But she was happy enough and shook it off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;
And in her heart she answered it and said,
"What matter, so I help him back to life?"

Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city-gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers;
Whom when she saw, "Lavaine," she cried, "Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?" He amazed,
"Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!
How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?"
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turned Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wars were rendered mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves. There first she saw the casque
Of Lancelot on the wall; her scarlet sleeve,
Though carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Streamed from it still; and in her heart she laughed,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
And when they gained the cell wherein he slept,
His battle-writhen° arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolf-skin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.

Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Uttered a little tender dolorous cry.
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he rolled his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
"Your prize the diamond sent you by the King."
His eyes glistened; she fancied, "Is it for me?"
And when the maid had told him all the tale
Of king and prince, the diamond sent, the quest
Assigned to her not worthy of it, she knelt
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand.
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
That does the task assigned, he kissed her face.
At once she slipt like water to the floor.
"Alas," he said, "your ride hath wearied you.
Rest must you have." "No rest for me," she said;
"Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest."
What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
Yet larger through his leanness, dwelt upon her,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colors on her simple face;
And Lancelot looked and was perplext in mind,
And being weak in body said no more,
But did not love the color; woman's love,
Save one, he not regarded, and so turned
Sighing, and feigned a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided through the fields,
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
There bode the night, but woke with dawn, and past
Down through the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave. So day by day she past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro
Gliding, and every day she tended him,
And likewise many a night; and Lancelot
Would, though he called his wound a little hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
Uncourteous, even he. But the meek maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her; till the hermit, skilled in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first

She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straitened him,
His honor rooted in dishonor° stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live;
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,
Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace
Beamed on his fancy, spoke, he answered not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant,° but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimmed her sight,
And drave her ere her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmured, "Vain, in vain! it cannot be.
He will not love me. How then? must I die?"
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, "Must I die?"
And now to right she turned, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest;

And "Him or death," she muttered, "death or him,"
Again and like a burthen,° "Him or death."

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
To Astolat returning rode the three.
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deemed she looked her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought,
"If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers° before he fall."
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of him
For her own self or hers: "and do not shun
To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
Such service have ye done me that I make
My will of yours, and prince and lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can."
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, "Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day." Then out she brake:
"Going? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word."
"Speak: that I live to hear," he said, "is yours."°
Then suddenly° and passionately she spoke:
"I have gone mad. I love you; let me die."

"Ah, sister," answered Lancelot, "what is this?"
And innocently extending her white arms,
"Your love," she said, "your love—to be your wife."
And Lancelot answered, "Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine;
But now there never will be wife of mine."
"No, no," she cried, "I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you through the world."
And Lancelot answered: "Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation—nay,
Full ill then should I quit° your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness." And she said,
"Not to be with you, not to see your face—
Alas for me then, my good days are done!"
"Nay, noble maid," he answered, "ten times nay!
This is not love, but love's first flash in youth,
Most common; yea, I know it of mine own self;
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age.
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your good knight be poor,

Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,°
So that would make you happy; furthermore,
Even to the death, as though ye were my blood,
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot."

While he spoke
She neither blushed nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied,
"Of all this will I nothing"; and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom through those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father: "Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion."

Lancelot said,
"That were against me;° what I can I will;"
And there that day remained, and toward even
Sent for his shield. Full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and looked
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;

And she by tact° of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat.
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture formed
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
"Have comfort," whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, "Peace to thee,
Sweet sister," whom she answered with all calm.
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching through the darkness, called; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,°
And called her song "The Song of Love and Death,"
And sang it; sweetly could she make and sing.

"Sweet is true love though given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain.
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be.
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

"Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away;
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay;
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

"I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die."

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
With shuddering, "Hark the Phantom of the house°
That ever shrieks before a death," and called
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, "Let me die!"

As when we dwell upon a word we know,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and thought,
"Is this Elaine?" till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
At last she said: "Sweet brothers, yesternight
I seemed a curious little maid again,

As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
And when ye used to take me with the flood
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.
And yet ye would not; but this night I dreamed
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, 'Now shall I have my will;'
And there I woke, but still the wish remained.
So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.
There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me;
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;
Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me,
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me one.
And there the King will know me and my love,
And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest!"

"Peace," said her father, "O my child, ye seem
Light-headed, for what force is yours to go

So far, being sick? and wherefore would ye look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?"

Then the rough Torre began to heave and move,
And bluster into stormy sobs and say:
"I never loved him; an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him down.
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the house."

To whom the gentle sister made reply:
"Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the highest."

"Highest?" the father answered, echoing "highest?"—
He meant to break the passion in her—"nay,
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame,
And she returns his love in open shame;
If this be high, what is it to be low?"

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:
"Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger. These are slanders; never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.

But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain; so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, though my love had no return.
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thanks, but you work against your own desire,
For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man°
Hither, and let me shrive me clean and die."

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
She, with a face bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
A letter, word for word; and when he asked,
"Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
Then will I bear it gladly;" she replied,
"For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,
But I myself must bear it." Then he wrote
The letter she devised; which being writ
And folded, "O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not," she said—"ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest. Lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat has gone from out my heart,
Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's

For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me; he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors."

She ceased. Her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deemed her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow through the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream° whereon the barge,
Palled all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took

And on the black decks° laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kissed her quiet brows, and saying to her,
"Sister, farewell forever," and again,
"Farewell, sweet sister," parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oared by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as though she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds; for he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seemed her statue, but that he,
Low-drooping till he wellnigh kissed her feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,

In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel° on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
They met, and Lancelot kneeling uttered: "Queen,
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making them
An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier° than her cygnet's. These are words;
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O, grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
Perchance, we both can pardon; but, my Queen,
I hear of rumors flying through your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect: let rumors be.
When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe."

While thus he spoke, half turned away, the Queen
Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand

Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied:

"It may be I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.°
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and wrong
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
For her!° for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you; have your joys apart.
I doubt not that, however changed, you keep
So much of what is graceful; and myself
Would shun to break those bonds of courtesy
In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule,
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!
A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;°
Deck her with these; tell her, she shines me down:
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O, as much fairer—as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds—hers not mine—

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights . . .

Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will—
She shall not have them."

Saying which she seized,
And, through the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flashed, and smote the stream.
Then from the smitten surface flashed, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge°
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood armed, and kept the door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that asked,
"What is it?" but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face° that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appalled them, and they said:

"He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fairy Queen, so fair!
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland."

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights. Then turned the tongueless man
From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel and the doors.
So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale°
And pure Sir Galahad° to uplift the maid;
And reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wondered at her,
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her;
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

"Most noble lord,° Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime called the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan:
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.

Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless."

Thus he read;
And ever in the reading lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who read
To hers which lay so silent, and at times,
So touched were they, half-thinking that her lips
Who had devised the letter moved again.

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:
"My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love.
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bade her no farewell;
Though, had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And helped her from herself."

Then said the Queen—
Sea was her wrath,° yet working after storm:
"Ye might at least have done her so much grace,
Fair lord, as would have helped her from her death."
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
He adding:

"Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me through the world, she asked;
It could not be. I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down,
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her—then would I,
More specially were he she wedded poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
To keep them in all joyance. More than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died."

He pausing, Arthur answered: "O my knight,
It will be to thy worship,° as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully."

So toward that shrine° which then in all the realm

Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshalled Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them: "Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazoned on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!" which was wrought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames
And people, from the high door streaming, brake
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who marked Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,
Drew near, and sighed in passing, 'Lancelot,
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love."
He answered with his eyes upon the ground,
"That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven."
But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approached him, and with full affection said:

"Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most joy and most affiance,° for I know

What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watched thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long practised knight
And let the younger and unskilled go by
To win his honor and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake."

Then answered Lancelot: "Fair she was, my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart—
Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound."

"Free love, so bound, were freest," said the King.
"Let love be free; free love is for the best.
And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love

Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She failed to bind, though being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know."

And Lancelot answered nothing,° but he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watched
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself: "Ah, simple heart and sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at last —
Farewell, fair lily. 'Jealousy in love?'
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the wondrous one
Who passes through the vision of the night—
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn
She kissed me saying, 'Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son,' and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.

Would she had drowned me in it, where'er it be!
For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it.
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me; but what use in it?
To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight,° a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me. Not without
She wills it—would I, if she willed it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,
I pray him, send a sudden angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills."

So groaned Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.°

THE HOLY GRAIL

From noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,°
Whom Arthur and his knighthood called the Pure,
Had past into the silent life of prayer,°
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honored him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that wakened love within,
To answer that which came; and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree,° darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puffed the swaying branches into smoke°
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius questioned Percivale:

"O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years;
For never have I known the world without,
Nor even strayed beyond the pale.° But thee,
When first thou camest—such a courtesy

Spake through the limbs and in the voice—I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamped with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?"

"Nay," said the knight;° "for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail°
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls, and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offered up to heaven."

To whom the monk: "The Holy Grail!—I trust
We are green° in heaven's eyes; but here too much
We moulder—as to things without I mean—
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,°
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?"

"Nay, monk! what phantom?" answered Percivale.

"The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—°
After the day of darkness,° when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where° the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was healed at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to heaven, and disappeared."

To whom the monk: "From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,°
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;
And there he built with wattles° from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?"

"A woman," answered Percivale, "a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister;° and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; though never maiden glowed,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,

Which, being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she prayed and fasted all the more.

"And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down through five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!
'O Father!' asked the maiden, 'might it come
To me by prayer and fastings?' 'Nay,' said he,
'I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow.'
And so she prayed and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, through her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

"For on a day she sent to speak with me.

And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness!
And 'O my brother Percivale,' she said,
'Sweet brother,° I have seen the Holy Grail;
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, "It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight." And the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Streamed through my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red° with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decayed, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be healed.'

"Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and prayed

Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and prayed even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

"And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armor, Galahad.°
'God make thee good as thou art beautiful.'
Said Arthur, when he dubbed him knight; and none
In so young youth was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, filled me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seemed
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

"Sister or brother none had he; but some
Called him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment—chatterers they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies—we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

"But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,

Saying: 'My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break through all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city;' and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Through him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

"Then came a year of miracle. O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,°
Fashioned by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin called it 'the Siege Perilous,'
Perilous for good and ill; 'for there,' he said,
'No man could sit but he should lose himself.'
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, 'If I lose myself, I save myself!'

"Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

"And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day;
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over covered with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

"I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest."

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
"What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?"

"Nay, for my lord," said Percivale, "the King
Was not in hall; for early that same day,

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail.

Scaped through a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help; for all her shining hair
Was smeared with earth, and either milky arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest. So the King arose and went°
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot; whence the King
Looked up, calling aloud, 'Lo, there! the roofs
Of our great hall are rolled in thunder-smoke!
Pray heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt!'
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

"O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones° of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall;
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,

And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peaked wings pointed to the Northern Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, 'We have still a king.'

"And, brother, had you known our hall within,
Broader and higher than any in all the lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams through the twelve great battles of our King.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
Where Arthur finds° the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank; and who shall blazon it? when and how?—
O, there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away!

"So to this hall full quickly rode the King,
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt

In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all;
And many of those° who burnt the hold, their arms
Hacked, and their foreheads grimed with smoke and seared,
Followed, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest; and then the King
Spake to me, being nearest, 'Percivale,'—
Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting,—'what is this?'

"O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister's vision and the rest, his face
Darkened,° as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seemed to be done in vain,
Darken; and 'Woe is me, my knights,' he cried,
'Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow.'
Bold was mine answer, 'Had thyself been here,
My King, thou wouldst have sworn.' 'Yea, yea,' said he,
'Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?'

" 'Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the holy thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw.'

"Then when he asked us, knight by knight, if any

Had seen it, all their answers were as one:
'Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows.'

" 'Lo, now,' said Arthur, 'have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?'

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, called,
'But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
"O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me!" '

" 'Ah, Galahad, Galahad,' said the King, 'for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye that follow but the leader's bell,'—
Brother, the King was hard upon his knights,—
'Taliessin° is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales'—
For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad;—'nay,' said he, 'but men
With strength and will to right the wronged, of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splashed and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made.
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass through this hall—how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more. Ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet. Come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before ye leave him for this quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made.'

"So when the sun broke next from underground,
All the great Table of our Arthur closed
And clashed in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like since Arthur came;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting, 'Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!'

"But when the next day brake from under-
ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
Tottered toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watched us pass; and lower, and where the
long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weighed the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of
flowers
Fell as we past; and men and boys astride
On wyvern,° lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling 'God speed!' but in the ways below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wailed and shrieked aloud,
'This madness has come on us for our sins.'
So to the Gate of the Three Queens° we came,
Where Arthur's wars are rendered mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

"And I was lifted up in heart,° and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance had beaten down the
knights,

So many and famous names; and never yet
Had heaven appeared so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

"Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, 'This quest is not for thee.'
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, 'This quest is not for thee.'

"And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Played ever back upon the sloping wave
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. 'I will rest here,'
I said, 'I am not worthy of the quest;'
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And thirsting in a land of sand and thorns.

"And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
'Rest here;' but when I touched her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

"And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flashed a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field
The plowman left his plowing and fell down
Before it; where it glittered on her pail
The milkmaid left her milking and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
'The sun is rising,' though the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armor with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels, and his horse
In golden armor jewelled everywhere;
And on the splendor came, flashing me blind,
And seemed to me the lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Opened his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touched him, and he, too,

Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

"And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top a city walled; the spires
Pricked with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirred a crowd; and these
Cried to me climbing, 'Welcome, Percivale!
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!'
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
Far through a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
'Where is that goodly company,' said I,
'That so cried out upon me?' and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasped,
'Whence and what art thou?' and even as he spoke
Fell into dust and disappeared, and I
Was left alone once more and cried in grief,
'Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust!'

"And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

" 'O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
"Take thou my robe," she said,° "for all is thine,"
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Followed Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-haired wisdom of the east.
But her thou hast not known; for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad.' When the hermit made an end,
In silver armor suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance and entered, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass° I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
'Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine.
I saw the fiery face° as of a child
That smote itself into the bread and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This holy thing, failed from my side, nor come
Covered, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blackened marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below

Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past through Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clashed with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke through all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go, and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go.'

"While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

"There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarred with a hundred wintry water-courses—
Storm at the top, and when we gained it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloomed, so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire. And at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,

Part black, part whitened with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, linked with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanished, though I yearned
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Opened and blazed with thunder such as seemed
Shoutings of all the sons of God. And first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armor starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens opened and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city° and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—

No larger, though the goal of all the saints—
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep,
And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touched
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more, returned
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars."

"O brother," asked Ambrosius,—"for in sooth
These ancient books—and they would win thee—teem,
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary° with ease,
Till my head swims, and then go forth and pass
Down to the little thorpe° that lies so close,
And almost plastered like a martin's nest
To these old walls—and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs
As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,

That have no meaning half a league away;
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,°
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs—
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman?"

Then Sir Percivale:
"All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O, my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I faltered from my quest and vow?
For after I had lain so many nights,
A bed-mate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of it.
Thither I made, there was I disarmed
By maidens each as fair as any flower;
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing, yet we twain
Had never kissed a kiss or vowed a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,

And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me, for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flashed across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kissed me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remembered Arthur's warning word,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
And the quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads° of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and tongue:
'We have heard of thee; thou art our greatest knight,
Our Lady says it, and we well believe.
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land.'
O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wailed and wept, and hated mine own self,
And even the holy quest, and all but her;
Then after I was joined with Galahad
Cared not for her nor anything upon earth."

Then said the monk: "Poor men, when yule is cold,°

Must be content to sit by little fires.
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little; yea, and blest be heaven
That brought thee here to this poor house of ours
Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
My cold heart with a friend; but O the pity
To find thine own first love once more—to hold,
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed!
For we that want the warmth of double life,
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthly-wise,
Seeing I never strayed beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
None of your knights?"

"Yea, so," said Percivale:
"One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
The pelican° on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon,
And toward him spurred, and hailed him, and he me,
And each made joy of either. Then he asked:
'Where is he? hast thou seen him—Lancelot?—Once,'
Said good Sir Bors, 'he dashed across me—mad,

And maddening what he rode;° and when I cried,
"Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy?" Lancelot shouted, "Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way!" °
So vanished.'

"Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness,° once the talk
And scandal of our table, had returned;
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them, to Bors
Beyond the rest. He well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the holy quest.
If God would send the vision, well; if not
The quest and he were in the hands of heaven.

"And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their crags,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
Paynim° amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven; and their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoffed at him
And this high quest as at a simple thing,

Told him he followed—almost Arthur's words—
A mocking fire: 'what other fire than he
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warmed?'
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
In darkness through innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens° sweep
Over him till by miracle—what else?—
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
Such as no wind could move; and through the gap
Glimmered the streaming scud. Then came a night
Still as the day was loud, and through the gap
The seven clear stars° of Arthur's Table Round—
For, brother, so one night, because they roll
Through such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—
And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,
In on him shone: 'And then to me, to me,'
Said good Sir Bors, 'beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had prayed or asked it for myself—
Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me!—
In color like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it pealed
A sharp quick thunder.' Afterwards, a maid,

Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go."

To whom the monk: "And I remember now
That pelican on the casque. Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board,
And mighty reverent at our grace was he;
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An outdoor sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one.
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reached
The city, found ye all your knights returned,
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?"

Then answered Percivale: "And that can I,
Brother, and truly; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we reached
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin,° hornless unicorns,
Cracked basilisks, and splintered cockatrices,
And shattered talbots, which had left the stones
Raw that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

"And there sat Arthur on the dais-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
And those that had not, stood before the King,

Who, when he saw me, rose and bade me hail,
Saying: 'A welfare in thine eyes reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill or plain, at sea or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings,
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for us
Half-wrenched a golden wing; but now—the quest,
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?'

"So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answered not, but, sharply turning, asked
Of Gawain, 'Gawain,° was this quest for thee?'

"'Nay, lord,' said Gawain, 'not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the quest was not for me;
For I was much a-wearied of the quest,
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me.'

"He ceased; and Arthur turned to whom at first

He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, pushed
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
Until the king espied him, saying to him,
'Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail;' and Bors,
'Ask me not, for I may not speak of it;
I saw it;' and the tears were in his eyes.

"Then there remained but Lancelot, for the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm.
Perhaps, like him of Cana° in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
'Thou, too, my Lancelot,' asked the King, 'My friend,
Our mightiest, hath this quest availed for thee?'

" 'Our mightiest!' answered Lancelot, with a groan;
'O King!'—and when he paused methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
'O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch; but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,

Not to be plucked asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be plucked asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said
That, save they could be plucked asunder, all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vowed
That I would work according as he willed.
And forth I went, and while I yearned and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away.
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Though heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening° in the sea-foam swayed a boat,
Half-swallowed in it, anchored with a chain;
And in my madness to myself I said,
"I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin."
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.

Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,°
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker! There was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs,
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between,
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
"Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal." Then with violence
The sword was dashed from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight, only the rounded moon
Through the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward. Up I climbed a thousand steps
With pain; as in a dream I seemed to climb
For ever; at the last I reached a door,

A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
"Glory and joy and honor to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail!"
Then in my madness I essayed the door;
It gave, and through a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seven-times-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swooned away—
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All palled in crimson samite,° and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes!
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veiled
And covered, and this quest was not for me.'

"So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain—nay,
Brother, I need not tell the foolish words,—
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now boldened by the silence of his King,—
Well, I will tell thee: 'O King, my liege,' he said,
'Hath Gawain failed in any quest of thine?
When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
I will be deafer than° the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,

To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward.'

"'Deafer,' said the blameless King,
'Gawain, and blinder unto holy things,
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot, and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music through them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

"'Nay—but thou errest, Lancelot; never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

"'And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Order—scarce returned a tithe—
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw.
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And, leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.
And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere.

" 'And some among you held that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow.
Not easily,° seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow,
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done, but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again. Ye have seen what ye have seen.'

"So spake the King; I knew not all he meant."

THE LAST TOURNAMENT

Dagonet, the fool, whom Gawain in his mood
Had made mock-knight of Arthur's Table Round,
At Camelot, high above the yellowing woods,
Danced like a withered leaf before the hall.
And toward him from the hall, with harp in hand,
And from the crown thereof a carcanet°
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize
Of Tristram° in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, "Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?"

For Arthur and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail. A stump of oak half-dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven snakes,
Clutched at the crag, and started through mid air
Bearing an eagle's nest; and through the tree
Rushed ever a rainy wind, and through the wind
Pierced ever a child's cry; and crag and tree
Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous nest,
This ruby necklace thrice around her neck,
And all unscarred from beak or talon, brought
A maiden babe, which Arthur pitying took,
Then gave it to his Queen to rear. The Queen,
But coldly acquiescing, in her white arms

Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling;° so forgot herself
A moment, and her cares; till that young life
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal cold
Past from her, and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the child.
So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
"Take thou the jewels of this dead innocence,
And make them, an thou wilt, a tourney-prize."

To whom the King, "Peace to thine eagle-borne
Dead nestling, and this honor after death,
Following thy will! but, O my Queen, I muse
Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or zone
Those diamonds that I rescued from the tarn,
And Lancelot won, methought, for thee to wear."

"Would rather you had let them fall," she cried,
"Plunge and be lost—ill-fated as they were,
A bitterness to me!—ye look amazed,
Not knowing° they were lost as soon as given—
Slid from my hands when I was leaning out
Above the river—that unhappy child
Past in her barge; but rosier luck will go
With these rich jewels, seeing that they came
Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
But the sweet body of a maiden babe.
Perchance—who knows?—the purest of thy knights
May win them for the purest of my maids."

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts
With trumpet-blowings ran on all the ways
From Camelot in among the faded fields
To furthest towers; and everywhere the knights
Armed for a day of glory before the King.

But on the hither side of that loud morn
Into the hall staggered, his visage ribbed
From ear to ear with dogwhip-weals, his nose
Bridge-broken, one eye out, and one hand off,
And one with shattered fingers dangling lame,
A churl, to whom indignantly the King:

"My churl, for whom Christ died, what evil beast
Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face? or fiend?
Man was it who marred heaven's image in thee thus?"

Then, sputtering through the hedge of splintered teeth,
Yet strangers to the tongue, and with blunt stump
Pitch-blackened° sawing the air, said the maimed churl:
"He took them and he drave them to his tower—
Some hold he was a table-knight of thine—
A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight, he—
Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red Knight
Brake in upon me and drave them to his tower;
And when I called upon thy name as one
That doest right by gentle and by churl,

Maimed me and mauled, and would outright have slain,
Save that he sware me to a message, saying:
'Tell thou the King and all his liars that I
Have founded my Round Table in the North,
And whatsoever his own knights have sworn
My knights have sworn the counter to it—and say
My tower is full of harlots, like his court,
But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
To be none other than themselves—and say
My knights are all adulterers like his own,
But mine are truer, seeing they profess
To be none other; and say his hour is come,
The heathen are upon him, his long lance
Broken, and his Excalibur a straw.' "

Then Arthur turned to Kay the seneschal:
"Take thou my churl, and tend him curiously°
Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be whole.
The heathen—but that ever-climbing wave,
Hurled back again so often in empty foam,
Hath lain for years at rest—and renegades,
Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion, whom
The wholesome realm is purged of otherwhere,
Friends, through your manhood and your fealty,—now
Make their last head like Satan° in the North.
My younger knights, new-made, in whom your flower
Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,

Move with me toward their quelling, which achieved,
The loneliest ways are safe from shore to shore.
But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
Enchaired to-morrow, arbitrate the field;
For wherefore shouldst thou care to mingle with it,
Only to yield my Queen her own again?
Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent; is it well?"

Thereto Sir Lancelot answered: "It is well;
Yet better if the King abide, and leave
The leading of his younger knights to me.
Else, for the King has willed it, it is well."

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot followed him,
And while they stood without the doors, the King
Turned to him saying: "Is it then so well?°
Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
Of whom was written, 'A sound° is in his ears'?
The foot that loiters, bidden go,—the glance
That only seems half-loyal to command,—
A manner somewhat fallen from reverence—'
Or have I dreamed the bearing of our knights
Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
Or whence the fear lest this my realm, upreared,
By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
From flat confusion and brute violences,
Reel back into the beast, and be no more?"

He spoke, and taking all his younger knights,
Down the slope city rode, and sharply turned

North by the gate. In her high bower the Queen,°
Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
Watched her lord pass, and knew not that she sighed.
Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme
Of bygone Merlin, "Where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

But when the morning of a tournament,
By these in earnest those in mockery called
The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,°
Brake with a wet wind blowing, Lancelot,
Round whose sick head all night, like birds of prey,
The words of Arthur flying shrieked, arose,
And down a streetway hung with folds of pure
White samite, and by fountains running wine,
Where children sat in white with cups of gold,
Moved to the lists, and there, with slow sad steps
Ascending, filled his double-dragoned chair.

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
Dame, damsel, each through worship of their Queen
White-robed in honor of the stainless child,
And some with scattered jewels, like a bank
Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of fire.
He looked but once, and vailed his eyes again.

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a dream
To ears but half-awakened, then one low roll
Of autumn thunder, and the jousts began;

And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf,
And gloom and gleam, and shower and shorn plume
Went down it. Sighing weariedly, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests are past away,
Sat their great umpire looking o'er the lists.
He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
Broken, but spake not; once, a knight cast down
Before his throne of arbitration cursed
The dead babe and the follies of the King;
And once the laces of a helmet cracked,
And showed him, like a vermin in its hole,
Modred, a narrow face. Anon he heard
The voice that billowed round the barriers roar
An ocean-sounding welcome to one knight,
But newly-entered, taller than the rest,
And armored all in forest green, whereon
There tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly-spray for crest,
With ever-scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle°—Tristram—late
From over-seas in Brittany returned,
And marriage with a princess of that realm,
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram° of the Woods—
Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime with pain
His own against him, and now yearned to shake
The burthen off his heart in one full shock
With Tristram even to death. His strong hands gript

And dinted the gilt dragons right and left,
Until he groaned for wrath—so many of those
That ware their ladies' colors on the casque
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the bounds,
And there with gibes and flickering mockeries
Stood, while he muttered "Craven crests! O shame!
What faith have these in whom they sware to love?
The glory of our Round Table is no more."

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave, the gems,
Not speaking other word than, "Hast thou won?
Art thou the purest, brother? See, the hand
Wherewith thou takest this is red!"° to whom
Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's languorous mood,
Made answer: "Ay, but wherefore toss me this
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound?
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy. Strength of heart
And might of limb, but mainly use and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King.
My hand—belike the lance hath dript upon it—
No blood of mine, I trow; but O chief knight,
Right arm of Arthur in the battle-field,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the world;
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine."

And Tristram round the gallery made his horse

Caracole; then bowed his homage, bluntly saying,
"Fair damsels, each to him who worships each
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
This day my Queen of Beauty is not here."
And most of these were mute, some angered, one
Murmuring, "All courtesy is dead," and one,
"The glory of our Round Table is no more."

Then fell thick rain,° plume droopt and mantle clung,
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day
Went glooming down in wet and weariness;
But under her black brows a swarthy one
Laughed shrilly, crying: "Praise the patient saints,
Our one white day of Innocence hath past,
Though somewhat draggled at the skirt. So be it.
The snowdrop only, flowering through the year,
Would make the world as blank as winter-tide.
Come—let us gladden their sad eyes, our Queen's
And Lancelot's at this night's solemnity
With all the kindlier colors of the field."

So dame and damsel glittered at the feast
Variously gay;° for he that tells the tale
Likened them, saying, as when an hour of cold
Falls on the mountain in midsummer snows,
And all the purple slopes of mountain flowers
Pass under white, till the warm hour returns

With veer of wind and all are flowers again,
So dame and damsel cast the simple white,
And glowing in all colors, the live grass,
Rose-campion,° bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced
About the revels, and with mirth so loud
Beyond all use, that, half-amazed, the Queen,
And wroth at Tristram and the lawless jousts,
Brake up their sports, then slowly to her bower
Parted, and in her bosom pain was lord.

And little Dagonet on the morrow morn,
High over all the yellowing autumn-tide,
Danced like a withered leaf before the hall.
Then Tristram saying, "Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?"
Wheeled round on either heel, Dagonet replied,
"Belike for lack of wiser company;
Or being fool, and seeing too much wit
Makes the world rotten, why, belike I skip
To know myself the wisest knight of all."
"Ay, fool," said Tristram, "but 't is eating dry
To dance without a catch, a roundelay
To dance to." Then he twangled on his harp,
And while he twangled little Dagonet stood
Quiet as any water-sodden log
Stayed in the wandering warble of a brook,
But when the twangling ended, skipt again;
And being asked, "Why skipt ye not, Sir Fool?"
Made answer, "I had liefer twenty years
Skip to the broken music° of my brains
Than any broken music thou canst make."

Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to come,
"Good now, what music have I broken, fool?"
And little Dagonet, skipping, "Arthur, the King's;
For when thou playest that air with Queen Isolt,
Thou makest broken music with thy bride,
Her daintier namesake down in Brittany—
And so thou breakest Arthur's music too."
"Save for that broken music in thy brains,
Sir Fool," said Tristram, "I would break thy head.
Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were o'er,
The life had flown, we sware but by the shell—
I am but a fool to reason with a fool—
Come, thou art crabbed and sour; but lean me down,
Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' ears,
And harken if my music be not true.

"'Free love—free field—we love but while we may.
The woods are hushed, their music is no more;
The leaf is dead, the yearning past away.
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are o'er;
New life, new love, to suit the newer day;
New loves are sweet as those that went before.
Free love—free field—we love but while we may.'

"Ye might have moved slow-measure to my tune,
Not stood stock-still. I made it in the woods,
And heard it ring as true as tested gold."

But Dagonet with one foot poised in his hand:

"Friend, did ye mark that fountain yesterday,
Made to run wine?—but this had run itself
All out like a long life to a sour end—
And them that round it sat with golden cups
To hand the wine to whosoever came—
The twelve small damosels white as Innocence,
In honor of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the Queen
Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize—and one of those white slips
Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,
'Drink, drink, Sir Fool,' and thereupon I drank,
Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the draught was
mud."

And Tristram: "Was it muddier than thy gibes?
Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—
Not marking how the knighthood mock thee,
fool—
'Fear God: honor the King—his one true knight—
Sole follower of the vows'—for here be they
Who knew thee swine enow before I came,
Smuttier° than blasted grain. But when the King
Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frighted all free fool from out thy heart;
Which left thee less than fool, and less than swine,
A naked aught—yet swine I hold thee still,
For I have flung thee pearls and find thee swine."

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet:
"Knight, an ye fling those rubies round my neck

In lieu of hers, I'll hold thou hast some touch
Of music, since I care not for thy pearls.
Swine? I have wallowed, I have washed—the world
Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day.
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
Hath fouled me—an I wallowed, then I washed—
I have had my day and my philosophies—
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's fool.
Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams, and geese
Trooped round a Paynim harper° once, who thrummed
On such a wire as musically as thou
Some such fine song—but never a king's fool."

And Tristram, "Then were swine, goats, asses, geese
The wiser fools, seeing thy Paynim bard
Had such a mastery of his mystery
That he could harp his wife up out of hell."

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of his foot,
"And whither harpest thou thine? down! and thyself
Down! and two more; a helpful harper thou,
That harpest downward! Dost thou know the star
We call the Harp of Arthur up in heaven?"

And Tristram, "Ay, Sir Fool, for when our King
Was victor wellnigh day by day, the knights,
Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills and in the signs of heaven."

And Dagonet answered: "Ay, and when the land
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set yourself
To babble about him, all to show your wit—
And whether he were king by courtesy,
Or king by right—and so went harping down
The black king's highway,° got so far and grew
So witty that ye played at ducks and drakes
With Arthur's vows on the great lake of fire.
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the star?"

"Nay, fool," said Tristram, "not in open day."
And Dagonet: "Nay, nor will; I see it and hear.
It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I and Arthur and the angels hear,
And then we skip." "Lo, fool," he said, "ye talk
Fool's treason; is the King thy brother fool?"
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and shrilled:
"Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of fools!
Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bristles, milk
From burning spurge,° honey from hornet-combs,
And men from beasts—Long live the king of fools!"

And down the city Dagonet danced away;
But through the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tristram toward Lyonnesse and the west.
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby-circled neck, but evermore
Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood

Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walked, or crept, or perched, or flew.
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath blown,
Unruffling waters re-collect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, returned;
But at the slot or fewmets° of a deer,
Or even a fallen feather, vanished again.

So on for all that day from lawn to lawn
Through many a league-long bower he rode. At length
A lodge of intertwisted beechen-boughs,
Furze-crammed and bracken-rooft, the which himself
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Against a shower, dark in the golden grove
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with him;
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish King,
With six or seven, when Tristram was away,
And snatched her thence, yet, dreading worse than shame
Her warrior Tristram, spake not any word,
But bode his hour, devising wretchedness.

And now that desert lodge to Tristram lookt
So sweet that, halting, in he past and sank
Down on a drift of foliage random-blown;
But could not rest for musing how to smooth
And sleek his marriage over to the queen.
Perchance in lone Tintagil far from all

The tonguesters° of the court she had not heard.
But then what folly had sent him over-seas
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolt, the daughter of the king? "Isolt
Of the White Hands" they called her: the sweet name
Allured him first, and then the maid herself,
Who served him well with those white hands of hers,
And loved him well, until himself had thought
He loved her also, wedded easily,
But left her all as easily, and returned.
The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
Had drawn him home—what marvel? then he laid
His brows upon the drifted leaf and dreamed.

He seemed to pace the strand of Brittany
Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,
And showed them both the ruby-chain, and both
Began to struggle for it, till his queen
Grasped it so hard that all her hand was red.
Then cried the Breton, "Look, her hand is red!
These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
And melts within her hand—her hand is hot
With ill desires, but this I gave thee, look,
Is all as cool and white as any flower."
Followed a rush of eagle's wings, and then
A whimpering of the spirit of the child,
Because the twain had spoiled her carcanet.

He dreamed; but Arthur° with a hundred spears
Rode far, till o'er the illimitable reed,
And many a glancing plash and sallowy° isle,
The wide-winged sunset of the misty marsh
Glared on a huge machicolated° tower
That stood with open doors, whereout was rolled
A roar of riot, as from men secure
Amid their marshes, ruffians at their ease
Among their harlot-brides, an evil song.
"Lo there," said one of Arthur's youth, for there,
High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
A goodly brother of the Table Round
Swung by the neck; and on the boughs a shield
Showing a shower of blood in a field noir,°
And therebeside a horn, inflamed the knights
At that dishonor done the gilded spur,
Till each would clash the shield and blow the horn.
But Arthur waved them back. Alone he rode.
Then at the dry harsh roar of the great horn,
That sent the face° of all the marsh aloft
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
Of shriek and plume, the Red Knight heard, and all,
Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,
In blood-red armor sallying, howled to the King:

"The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash thee flat!—
Lo! art thou not that eunuch-hearted king

Who fain had clipt free manhood from the world—
The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's curse, and I!
Slain was the brother of my paramour
By a knight of thine, and I that heard her whine
And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
Sware by the scorpion-worm° that twists in hell
And stings itself to everlasting death,
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
And tumbled. Art thou king?—Look to thy life!"

He ended. Arthur knew the voice; the face
Wellnigh was helmet-hidden, and the name
Went wandering somewhere darkling in his mind.
And Arthur deigned not use of word or sword,
But let the drunkard, as he stretched from horse
To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
Down from the causeway heavily to the swamp
Fall, as the crest of some slow-arching wave,
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,
Drops flat, and after the great waters break
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,
From less and less to nothing; thus he fell
Head-heavy. Then the knights, who watched him, roared
And shouted and leapt down upon the fallen,
There trampled out his face from being known,
And sank his head in mire, and slimed themselves;
Nor heard the King for their own cries, but sprang
Through open doors, and swording right and left

Men, women, on their sodden faces, hurled
The tables over and the wines, and slew
Till all the rafters rang with woman-yells,
And all the pavement streamed with massacre.
Then, echoing yell with yell, they fired the tower,
Which half that autumn night, like the live North,
Red-pulsing up through Alioth and Alcor,°
Made all above it, and a hundred meres
About it, as the water Moab saw°
Come round by the east, and out beyond them flushed
The long low dune and lazy-plunging sea.

So all the ways were safe from shore to shore,
But in the heart of Arthur° pain was lord.

Then, out of Tristram waking, the red dream
Fled with a shout, and that low lodge returned,
Mid-forest, and the wind among the boughs.
He whistled his good war-horse left to graze
Among the forest greens, vaulted upon him,
And rode beneath an ever-showering leaf,
Till one lone woman,° weeping near a cross,
Stayed him. "Why weep ye?" "Lord," she said, "my man
Hath left me or is dead;" whereon he thought—
"What, if she hate me now? I would not this.
What, if she love me still? I would not that.
I know not what I would"—but said to her,
"Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate return,
He find thy favor changed and love thee not"—

Then pressing day by day through Lyonnesse
Last in a roky° hollow, belling, heard
The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly hounds
Yelp at his heart,° but, turning, past and gained
Tintagil, half in sea and high on land,
A crown of towers.

Down in a casement sat,
A low sea-sunset glorying round her hair
And glossy-throated grace, Isolt the queen,
And when she heard the feet of Tristram grind
The spiring stone° that scaled about her tower,
Flushed, started, met him at the doors, and there
Belted his body with her white embrace,
Crying aloud: "Not Mark—not Mark, my soul!
The footstep fluttered me at first—not he!
Catlike through his own castle steals my Mark,
But warrior-wise thou stridest through his halls
Who hates thee, as I him—even to the death.
My soul, I felt my hatred for my Mark
Quicken within me, and knew that thou wert nigh."
To whom Sir Tristram smiling, "I am here;
Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine."

And drawing somewhat backward she replied:
"Can he be wronged who is not even his own,
But save for dread of thee had beaten me,
Scratched, bitten, blinded, marred me somehow—Mark?
What rights are his that dare not strike for them?

Not lift a hand—not, though he found me thus!
But harken! have ye met him? hence he went
To-day for three days' hunting—as he said—
And so returns belike within an hour.
Mark's way, my soul!—but eat not thou with Mark,°
Because he hates thee even more than fears,
Nor drink; and when thou passest any wood
Close vizor, lest an arrow from the bush
Should leave me all alone with Mark and hell.
My God, the measure of my hate for Mark
Is as the measure of my love for thee!"

So, plucked one way by hate and one by love,
Drained of her force, again she sat, and spake
To Tristram, as he knelt before her, saying:
"O hunter, and O blower of the horn,
Harper, and thou hast been a rover too,
For, ere I mated with my shambling king,
Ye twain had fallen out about the bride
Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,
If prize she were—what marvel?—she could see—
Thine, friend; and ever since my craven seeks
To wreck thee villainously—but, O Sir Knight,
What dame or damsel have ye kneeled to last?"

And Tristram, "Last to my Queen Paramount,°
Here now to my queen paramount of love
And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when first

Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonnesse,
Sailing from Ireland."

Softly laughed Isolt:
"Flatter me not, for hath not our great Queen
My dole° of beauty trebled?" and he said:
"Her beauty is her beauty, and thine thine,
And thine is more to me—soft, gracious, kind—
Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips
Most gracious; but she, haughty, even to him,
Lancelot; for I have seen him wan enow
To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
Have yielded him her love."

To whom Isolt:
"Ah, then, false hunter and false harper, thou
Who brakest through the scruple of my bond,
Calling me thy white hind, and saying to me
That Guinevere had sinned against the highest,
And I—misyoked with such a want of man—
That I could hardly sin against the lowest."

He answered: "O my soul, be comforted!
If this be sweet, to sin in leading-strings,
If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,
Crowned warrant° had we for the crowning sin
That made us happy; but how ye greet me—fear
And fault and doubt—no word of that fond tale—
Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away."

And, saddening on the sudden, spake Isolt:
"I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! for, hour by hour,
Here in the never-ended afternoon,
O, sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee
Seemed those far-rolling, westward-smiling seas,
Watched from this tower. Isolt of Britain dashed
Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chilled her bride-kiss? Wedded her?
Fought in her father's battles? wounded there?
The King was all fulfilled with gratefulness,
And she, my namesake of the hands, that healed
Thy hurt and heart with unguent and caress—
Well—can I wish her any huger wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast thou left
To pine and waste in those sweet memories.
O, were I not my Mark's, by whom° all men
Are noble, I should hate thee more than love."

And Tristram, fondling her light hands, replied:
"Grace, queen, for being loved; she loved me well.
Did I love her? the name at least I loved.
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!
The night was dark; the true star set. Isolt!
The name was ruler of the dark—Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful, meek,
Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to God."°

And Isolt answered: "Yea, and why not I?
Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pale-blooded, prayerful. Let me tell thee now.
Here one black, mute midsummer night I sat,
Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering where,
Murmuring a light song I had heard thee sing,
And once or twice I spake thy name aloud.
Then flashed a levin-brand;° and near me stood,
In fuming sulphur blue and green, a fiend—
Mark's way to steal behind one in the dark—
For there was Mark: 'He has wedded her,' he said,
Not said, but hissed it; then this crown of towers
So shook to such a roar of all the sky,
That here in utter dark I swooned away,
And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
'I will flee hence and give myself to God'—
And thou wert lying in thy new leman's° arms."

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her hand,
"May God be with thee, sweet, when old and gray,
And past desire!" a saying that angered her.
"'May God be with thee, sweet, when thou art old,
And sweet no more to me!' I need Him now.
For when had Lancelot uttered aught so gross
Even to the swineherd's malkin° in the mast?
The greater man the greater courtesy.

Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's knight!
But thou, through ever harrying thy wild beasts—
Save that to touch a harp, tilt with a lance
Becomes thee well—art grown wild beast thyself.
How darest thou, if lover, push me even
In fancy from thy side, and set me far
In the gray distance, half a life away,
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it, unswear!
Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mark and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I should suck
Lies like sweet wines. Lie to me; I believe.
Will ye not lie? not swear, as there ye kneel,
And solemnly as when ye sware to him,
The man of men, our King—My God, the power
Was once in vows when men believed the King!
They lied not then who sware, and through their vows
The King prevailing made his realm—I say,
Swear to me thou wilt love me even when old,
Gray-haired, and past desire, and in despair."

Then Tristram, pacing moodily up and down:
"Vows! did you keep the vow you made to Mark
More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay, but learnt,
The vow that binds too strictly snaps itself—
My knighthood taught me this—ay, being snapt—
We run more counter to the soul thereof

Than had we never sworn. I swear no more.
I swore to the great King, and am forsworn.
For once—even to the height—I honored him.
'Man, is he man at all?' methought, when first
I rode from our rough Lyonnesse, and beheld
That victor of the Pagan throned in hall—
His hair, a sun that rayed from off a brow
Like hill-snow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
The golden beard that clothed his lips with light—
Moreover, that weird legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me; then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon; he seemed to me no man,
But Michael° trampling Satan; so I sware,
Being amazed. But this went by—The vows!
O, ay—the wholesome madness of an hour—
They served their use, their time; for every knight
Believed himself a greater than himself,
And every follower eyed him as a God;
Till he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewise he had done,
And so the realm was made. But then their vows—
First mainly through that sullying of our Queen—
Began to gall the knighthood, asking whence
Had Arthur right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? washed up from out the deep?
They failed to trace him through the flesh and blood
Of our old kings. Whence then? a doubtful lord
To bind them by inviolable vows,

Which flesh and blood perforce would violate;
For feel this arm of mine—the tide within
Red with free chase and heather-scented air,
Pulsing full man. Can Arthur make me pure
As any maiden child? lock up my tongue
From uttering freely what I freely hear?
Bind me to one? The wide world laughs at it.
And worldling of the world am I, and know
The ptarmigan° that whitens ere his hour
Woos his own end; we are not angels here
Nor shall be. Vows—I am woodman of the woods,
And hear the garnet-headed yaffingale°
Mock them—my soul, we love but while we may;
And therefore is my love so large for thee,
Seeing it is not bounded save by love."

Here ending, he moved toward her, and she said:
"Good; an I turned away my love for thee
To some one thrice as courteous as thyself—
For courtesy wins woman all as well
As valor may, but he that closes both
Is perfect, he is Lancelot—taller indeed,
Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved
This knightliest of all knights, and cast thee back
Thine own small saw, 'We love but while we may,'
Well then, what answer?"

He that while she spake,
Mindful of what he brought to adorn her with,
The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch

The warm white apple of her throat, replied,
"Press this a little closer, sweet, until—
Come, I am hungered and half-angered—meat,
Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the death,
And out beyond into the dream to come."

So then, when both were brought to full accord,
She rose, and set before him all he willed;
And after these had comforted the blood
With meats and wines, and satiated their hearts—
Now talking of their woodland paradise,
The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts, the lawns;
Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
And craven shifts, and long crane legs of Mark—
Then Tristram laughing caught the harp and sang:

"Ay, ay, O, ay—the winds that bend the brier!
A star in heaven, a star within the mere!
Ay, ay, O, ay—a star was my desire,
And one was far apart and one was near.
Ay, ay, O, ay—the winds that blow the grass!
And one was water and one star was fire,
And one will ever shine and one will pass.
Ay, ay, O, ay—the winds that move the mere!"

Then in the light's last glimmer Tristram showed
And swung the ruby carcanet. She cried,
"The collar of some Order, which our King
Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy peers."

Then Tristram laughing caught the harp, and sang.

"Not so, my queen," he said, "but the red fruit
Grown on a magic oak-tree in mid-heaven,
And won by Tristram as a tourney-prize,
And hither brought by Tristram for his last
Love-offering and peace-offering unto thee."

He spoke, he turned, then, flinging round her neck,
Claspt it, and cried, "Thine Order, O my queen!"
But, while he bowed to kiss the jewelled throat,
Out of the dark, just as the lips had touched,
Behind him rose a shadow and a shriek—
"Mark's way,"° said Mark, and clove him through the brain.

That night° came Arthur home, and while he climbed,
All in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom,
The stairway to the hall, and looked and saw
The great Queen's bower was dark,—about his feet
A voice clung sobbing till he questioned it,
"What art thou?" and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, "I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again."

GUINEVERE

Queen Guinevere had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Almesbury°
Weeping, none with her save a little maid,
A novice.° One low light betwixt them burned
Blurred by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit at full,
The white mist, like a face-cloth° to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still.

For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance. For this
He chilled the popular praises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
And tampered with° the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left;° and sought
To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end; and all his aims
Were sharpened by strong hate for Lancelot.
For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mocked° the may,
Had been—their wont—a-maying and returned,

That Modred still in green, all ear and eye,
Climbed to the high top of the garden-wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best
Enid and lissome Vivien,° of her court
The wiliest and the worst; and more than this
He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he crouched, and as the gardener's hand
Picks from the colewort° a green caterpillar,
So from the high wall and the flowering grove
Of grasses Lancelot plucked him by the heel,
And cast him as a worm upon the way;
But when he knew the prince though marred with dust,
He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these
Full knightly without scorn. For in those days
No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn;
But, if a man were halt, or hunched, in him
By those whom God had made full-limbed and tall,
Scorn was allowed as part of his defect,
And he was answered softly by the King
And all his Table. So Sir Lancelot holp
To raise the prince, who rising twice or thrice
Full sharply smote his knees, and smiled, and went;
But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all day long

A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare coast.

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laughed
Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shuddered, as the village wife who cries,
"I shudder,° some one steps across my grave;"
Then laughed again, but faintlier, for indeed
She half-foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers
Would be for evermore a name of scorn.
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,
Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Heart-hiding smile, and gray persistent eye.
Henceforward too, the Powers that° tend the soul,
To help it from the death that° cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, began
To vex and plague her. Many a time for hours,
Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went
Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,
Heard by the watcher in a haunted house,
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—
Held her awake; or if she slept she dreamed
An awful dream,° for then she seemed to stand
On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made at her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it till it touched her, and she turned—

When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,
And blackening, swallowed all the land, and in it
Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke.
And all this trouble did not pass but grew,
Till even the clear face of the guileless King,
And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane; and at the last she said:
"O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,
For if thou tarry we shall meet again,
And if we meet again some evil chance
Will make the smouldering scandal break and blaze
Before the people and our lord the King."
And Lancelot ever promised, but remained,
And still they met and met. Again she said,
"O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence."
And then they were agreed upon a night—
When the good King should not be there—to meet
And part for ever. Vivien, lurking, heard.
She told Sir Modred. Passion-pale they met
And greeted. Hands in hands, and eye to eye,
Low on the border of her couch they sat
Stammering and staring. It was their last hour,
A madness of farewells. And Modred brought
His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony; and crying with full voice,
"Traitor, come out, ye are trapt at last," aroused
Lancelot, who rushing outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and hurled him headlong, and he fell

Stunned, and his creatures took and bare him off,
And all was still. Then she, "The end is come,
And I am shamed for ever;" and he said:
"Mine be the shame, mine was the sin; but rise,
And fly to my strong castle over-seas.
There will I hide thee till my life shall end,
There hold thee with my life against the world."
She answered: "Lancelot, wilt thou hold me so?
Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells.
Would God that thou couldst hide me from myself!
Mine is the shame, for I was wife, and thou
Unwedded; yet rise now, and let us fly,
For I will draw me into sanctuary,°
And bide my doom." So Lancelot got her horse,
Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kissed, and parted weeping; for he past,
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land; but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste and weald,
And heard the spirits of the waste and weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard them moan.
And in herself she moaned "Too late, too late!"
Till in the cold wind that foreruns the morn,
A blot in heaven, the raven, flying high,
Croaked, and she thought, "He spies a field of death;

For now the heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the court,
Begin to slay the folk and spoil the land."

And when she came to Almesbury she spake
There to the nuns, and said, "Mine enemies
Pursue me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it till her time
To tell you;" and her beauty, grace, and power
Wrought as a charm upon them, and they spared
To ask it.

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown among the nuns,
Nor with them mixed, nor told her name, nor sought,
Wrapt in her grief, for housel or for shrift,°
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heedlessness
Which often lured her from herself; but now,
This night, a rumor wildly blown about
Came that Sir Modred had usurped the realm
And leagued him with the heathen, while the King
Was waging war on Lancelot.° Then she thought,
"With what a hate the people and the King
Must hate me," and bowed down upon her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who brooked
No silence, brake it, uttering "Late! so late!
What hour, I wonder now?" and when she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum

An air the nuns had taught her: "Late, so late!"
Which when she heard, the Queen looked up, and said,
"O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may weep."
Whereat full willingly sang the little maid.

"Late, late, so late!° and dark the night and chill!
Late, late, so late! but we can enter still.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light had we; for that we do repent,
And learning this, the bridegroom will relent.
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"No light! so late! and dark and chill the night!
O, let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now.

"Have we not heard the bridegroom is so sweet?
O, let us in, though late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now."

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering
Her thought when first she came, wept the sad Queen.
Then said the little novice prattling to her:

"O pray you, noble lady, weep no more;
But let my words—the words of one so small,
Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfort your sorrows, for they do not flow
From evil done; right sure am I of that,

Who see your tender grace and stateliness.
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the King's,
And weighing find them less; for gone is he
To wage grim war against Sir Lancelot there,
Round that strong castle where he holds the Queen;
And Modred° whom he left in charge of all,
The traitor—Ah, sweet lady, the King's grief
For his own self, and his own Queen, and realm,
Must needs be thrice as great as any of ours!
For me, I thank the saints, I am not great;
For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done;
None knows it, and my tears have brought me good.
But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this grief
Is added to the griefs the great must bear,
That, howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a cloud;
As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wicked Queen,
And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King it could not be."

Then to her own sad heart muttered the Queen,
"Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?"°
But openly she answered, "Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the realm?"

"Yea," said the maid, "this is all woman's grief,°
That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table Round
Which good King Arthur founded, years ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders, there
At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen."

Then thought the Queen within herself again,
"Will the child kill me with her foolish prate?"
But openly she spake and said to her,
"O little maid, shut in by nunnery walls,
What canst thou know of Kings and Tables Round,
Or what of signs and wonders, but the signs
And simple miracles of thy nunnery?"

To whom the little novice garrulously:
"Yea, but I know; the land was full of signs
And wonders ere the coming of the Queen.
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it,
And rode thereto from Lyonnesse; and he said
That as he rode, an hour or maybe twain
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turning—there,
All down the lonely coast of Lyonnesse,
Each with a beacon-star upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland flame

Far on into the rich heart of the west.
And in the light the white mermaiden° swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood from the sea,
And sent a deep sea-voice through all the land,
To which the little elves° of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn.
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim-lit woods
Himself beheld three spirits mad with joy
Come dashing down on a tall wayside flower,
That shook beneath them as the thistle shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the seed.
And still at evenings on before his horse
The flickering fairy-circle wheeled and broke
Flying, and linked again, and wheeled and broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life.
And when at last he came to Camelot,
A wreath of airy dancers hand-in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the hall;
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dreamed; for every knight
Had whatsoever meat he longed for served
By hands unseen; and even as he said
Down in the cellars merry bloated things
Shouldered the spigot, straddling on the butts
While the wine ran; so glad were spirits and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen."

Then spake the Queen and somewhat bitterly,
"Were they so glad? ill prophets were they all,

Spirits and men. Could none of them foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what has fallen upon the realm?"

To whom the novice garrulously again:
"Yea, one, a bard, of whom my father said,
Full many a noble war-song had he sung,
Even in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming wave;
And many a mystic lay of life and death,
Had chanted on the smoky mountain-tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like flame.
So said my father—and that night the bard°
Sang Arthur's glorious wars, and sang the King
As wellnigh more than man, and railed at those
Who called him the false son of Gorloïs.
For there was no man knew from whence he came;
But after tempest, when the long wave broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude and Bos,°
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,
And that was Arthur, and they fostered him
Till he by miracle° was approven King;
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his birth; and could he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,

The twain together well might change the world.
But even in the middle of his song
He faltered, and his hand fell from the harp,
And pale he turned, and reeled, and would have fallen,
But that they stayed him up; nor would he tell
His vision; but what doubt that he foresaw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?"

Then thought the Queen, "Lo! they have set her on,
Our simple-seeming abbess and her nuns,
To play upon me," and bowed her head nor spake.
Whereat the novice crying, with clasped hands,
Shame on her own garrulity garrulously,
Said the good nuns would check her gadding tongue
Full often, "and, sweet lady, if I seem
To vex an ear too sad to listen to me,
Unmannerly, with prattling and the tales
Which my good father told me, check me too
Nor let me shame my father's memory, one
Of noblest manners, though himself would say
Sir Lancelot had the noblest; and he died,
Killed in a tilt, come next, five summers back,
And left me; but of others who remain,
And of the two first-famed for courtesy—
And pray you check me if I ask amiss—
But pray you, which had noblest, while you moved
Among them, Lancelot or our lord the King?"

Then the pale Queen looked up and answered her:
"Sir Lancelot, as became a noble knight,
Was gracious to all ladies, and the same
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and the King
In open battle or the tilting-field
Forbore his own advantage, and these two
Were the most nobly-mannered men of all;
For manners are not idle, but the fruit
Of loyal nature and of noble mind."

"Yea," said the maid, "be manners such fair fruit?
Then Lancelot's needs must be a thousand-fold
Less noble, being, as all rumor runs,
The most disloyal friend in all the world."

To which a mournful answer made the Queen:
"O, closed about by narrowing nunnery-walls,
What knowest thou of the world and all its lights
And shadows, all the wealth and all the woe?
If ever Lancelot, that most noble knight,
Were for one hour less noble than himself,
Pray for him that he scape the doom of fire,°
And weep for her who drew him to his doom."

"Yea," said the little novice, "I pray for both;
But I should all as soon believe that his,
Sir Lancelot's, were as noble as the King's,
As I could think, sweet lady, yours would be
Such as they are, were you the sinful Queen."

So she, like many another babbler, hurt
Whom she would soothe, and harmed where she would heal;
For here a sudden flush of wrathful heat
Fired all the pale face of the Queen, who cried:
"Such as thou art be never maiden more
For ever! thou their tool, set on to plague
And play upon and harry me, petty spy
And traitress!" When that storm of anger brake
From Guinevere, aghast the maiden rose,
White as her veil, and stood before the Queen
As tremulously as foam upon the beach
Stands in a wind, ready to break and fly,
And when the Queen had added, "Get thee hence!"
Fled frighted. Then that other left alone
Sighed, and began to gather heart again,
Saying in herself: "The simple, fearful child
Meant nothing, but my own too-fearful guilt,
Simpler than any child, betrays itself.
But help me, Heaven, for surely I repent!°
For what is true repentance but in thought—
Nor even in inmost thought to think again
The sins that made the past so pleasant to us?
And I have sworn never to see him more,
To see him more."

And even in saying this,
Her memory from old habit of the mind
Went slipping back upon the golden days
In which she saw him first, when Lancelot came,°

Reputed the best knight and goodliest man,
Ambassador, to yield her to his lord
Arthur, and led her forth, and far ahead
Of his and her retinue moving, they,
Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
And sport and tilts and pleasure,—for the time
Was may-time, and as yet no sin was dreamed—
Rode under groves that looked a paradise
Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
That seemed the heavens upbreaking through the earth.
And on from hill to hill, and every day
Beheld at noon in some delicious dale
The silk pavilions of King Arthur raised
For brief repast or afternoon repose
By couriers gone before; and on again,
Till yet once more ere set of sun they saw
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship,
That crowned the state pavilion of the King,
Blaze by the rushing brook or silent well.

But when the Queen immersed in such a trance,
And moving through the past unconsciously,
Came to that point where first she saw the King
Ride toward her from the city, sighed to find
Her journey done, glanced at him, thought him cold,
High, self-contained, and passionless, not like him,
"Not like my Lancelot"—while she brooded thus

And grew half-guilty in her thoughts again,
There rode an armed warrior to the doors.
A murmuring whisper through the nunnery ran,
Then on a sudden a cry, "The King!" She sat
Stiff-stricken, listening; but when armed feet
Through the long gallery from the outer doors
Rang coming, prone from off her seat she fell,
And grovelled with her face against the floor.
There with her milk-white arms and shadowy hair
She made her face a darkness from the King,
And in the darkness heard his armed feet
Pause by her; then came silence, then a voice,
Monotonous and hollow like a ghost's
Denouncing judgment, but, though changed, the King's:

"Liest thou here so low, the child of one
I honored, happy, dead before thy shame?°
Well is it° that no child is born of thee.
The children born of thee are sword and fire,
Red ruin, and the breaking up of laws,
The craft of kindred° and the godless hosts
Of heathen swarming o'er the Northern Sea;
Whom I, while yet Sir Lancelot, my right arm,
The mightiest of my knights, abode with me,
Have everywhere about this land of Christ
In twelve great battles ruining overthrown.
And knowest thou now from whence I come—from him,
From waging bitter war with him; and he,
That did not shun to smite me in worse way,

Had yet that grace of courtesy in him left,
He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight. But many a knight was slain;
And many more and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land.
And many more when Modred raised revolt,
Forgetful of their troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me.
And of this remnant will I leave a part,
True men who love me still, for whom I live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hair of this low head be harmed.
Fear not; thou shalt be guarded till my death.
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have erred not, that I march to meet my doom.
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to me,
That I the King should greatly care to live;
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life.
Bear with me for the last time while I show,
Even for thy sake, the sin which thou hast sinned.
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relaxed its hold upon us, and the ways
Were filled with rapine, here and there a deed
Of prowess done redressed a random wrong.
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood-errant° of this realm and all
The realms together under me, their Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,

And be the fair beginning of a time.
I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honor his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
And worship her by years of noble deeds,
Until they won her; for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a man.
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, 'Lo, mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy!'
Then came thy shameful sin with Lancelot;
Then came the sin of Tristram and Isolt;
Then others, following these my mightiest knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fair names,
Sinned also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all through thee! so that this life of mine
I guard as God's high gift from scathe and wrong,

Not greatly care to lose; but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden days before thy sin.
For which of us who might be left could speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
Thy shadow still would glide from room to room,
And I should evermore be vext with thee
In hanging robe or vacant ornament,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stair.
For think not, though thou wouldst not love thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee.
I am not made of so slight elements.
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy shame.
I hold that man the worst of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the wife
Whom he knows false abide and rule the house:
For being through his cowardice allowed
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the crowd,
Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and saps
The fealty of our friends, and stirs the pulse
With devil's leaps, and poisons half the young.
Worst of the worst were that man he that reigns!

Better the King's waste hearth and aching heart
Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people and their bane!"

He paused, and in the pause she crept an inch
Nearer, and laid her hands about his feet.
Far off a solitary trumpet blew.
Then waiting by the doors the war-horse neighed
As at a friend's voice, and he spake again:

"Yet think not that I came to urge thy crimes;
I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, laying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet.
The wrath which forced my thoughts on that fierce law,
The doom of treason° and the flaming death,—
When first I learnt thee hidden here,—is past.
The pang—which, while I weighed thy heart with one°
Too wholly true to dream untruth in thee,
Made my tears burn—is also past—in part.
And all is past, the sin is sinned, and I,
Lo, I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives! do thou for thine own soul the rest.
But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing! O imperial-moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with thee—

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's; nay, they never were the King's.
I cannot take thy hand; that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinned; and mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cries,
'I loathe thee;' yet not less, O Guinevere,
For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love through flesh hath wrought into my life
So far that my doom is, I love thee still.
Let no man dream but that I love thee still.
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hereafter in that world where all are pure
We two may meet before high God, and thou
Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine, and know
I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another. Leave me that,
I charge thee, my last hope. Now must I hence.
Through the thick night I hear the trumpet blow.
They summon me their King to lead mine hosts
Far down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they call
My sister's son—no kin of mine, who leagues
With Lords of the White Horse, heathen, and knights,
Traitors—and strike him dead, and meet myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious doom.
And thou remaining here wilt learn the event;
But hither shall I never come again,

Then she stretch'd out her arms and cried aloud "Oh Arthur!" . . .

Never lie by thy side, see thee no more—
Farewell!"

And while she grovelled at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head
Perceived the waving of his hands that blest.

Then, listening till those armed steps were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish found
The casement: "peradventure," so she thought,
"If I might see his face, and not be seen,"
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the sad nuns with each a light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore.
And while he spake to these his helm was lowered,
To which for crest the golden dragon clung
Of Britain; so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a steam of fire.
And even then he turned; and more and more
The moony vapor rolling round the King,
Who seemed the phantom of a giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him gray
And grayer, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom.

Then she stretched out her arms and cried
aloud,

"O Arthur!" there her voice brake suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a cliff
Fails in mid air, but gathering at the base
Re-makes itself, and flashes down the vale—
Went on in passionate utterance:

"Gone—my lord!
Gone through my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak.
Farewell? I should have answered his farewell.
His mercy choked me. Gone, my lord the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution. He, the King,
Called me polluted. Shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul, nor can I kill my shame;
No, nor by living can I live it down.
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks to months,
The months will add themselves and make the years,
The years will roll into the centuries,
And mine will ever be a name of scorn.
I must not dwell on that defeat of fame.
Let the world be; that is but of the world—
What else? what hope? I think there was a hope,
Except he mocked me when he spake of hope;
His hope he called it; but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts.
And blessed be the King, who hath forgiven
My wickedness to him, and left me hope

That in mine own heart I can live down sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God! Ah great and gentle lord,
Who wast, as is the conscience of a saint
Among his warring senses, to thy knights—
To whom my false voluptuous pride, that took
Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half-despised the height
To which I would not or I could not climb—
I thought I could not breathe in that fine air,
That pure severity of perfect light—
I yearned for warmth and color which I found
In Lancelot—now I see thee what thou art,
Thou art the highest and most human too,
Not Lancelot, nor another. Is there none
Will tell the King I love him though so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great battle? none!
Myself must tell him in that purer life,
But now it were too daring. Ah my God,
What might I not have made of thy fair world,
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?
It was my duty to have loved the highest;
It surely was my profit had I known;
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.
We needs must love the highest when we see it,
Not Lancelot, nor another."

Here her hand
Grasped made her vail her eyes. She looked and saw
The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said to her,

"Yea, little maid, for am *I* not forgiven?"
Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns
All round her, weeping; and her heart was loosed
Within her, and she wept with these and said:

"Ye know me then, that wicked one, who broke
The vast design and purpose of the King.
O, shut me round with narrowing nunnery-walls,
Meek maidens, from the voices crying, 'Shame!'
I must not scorn myself; he loves me still.
Let no one dream but that he loves me still.
So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with you;
Wear black and white, and be a nun like you,
Fast with your fasts, not feasting with your feasts;
Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at your joys,
But not rejoicing; mingle with your rites;
Pray and be prayed for; lie before your shrines;
Do each low office of your holy house;
Walk your dim cloister, and distribute dole°
To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransomed us, and haler° too than I;
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal mine own;
And so wear out in alms-deed and in prayer
The sombre close of that voluptuous day
Which wrought the ruin of my lord the King."

She said. They took her to themselves; and she
Still hoping, fearing "is it yet too late?"

Dwelt with them, till in time their abbess died.
Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
Was chosen abbess, there, an abbess, lived
For three brief years, and there, an abbess, past
To where beyond these voices there is peace.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

That story which the bold Sir Bedivere,°
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King:

"I found Him° in the shining of the stars,
I marked Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is—
Perchance, because we see not to the close;—
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain,
And all whereon I leaned in wife and friend

Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm°
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death!
Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die."

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain killed
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling: "Hollow, hollow all delight!
Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight!"
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
Their season in the night and wail their way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
Shrilled; but in going mingled with dim cries
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sacked by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and called:
"Who spake? A dream. O, light upon the wind,
Thine, Gawain, was the voice—are these dim cries
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?"

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:
"O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamour of the field;

But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever; but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death
Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;
And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise—
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old."

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move than when we strove in youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
And shook him through the north. Ill doom is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.
And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Through this blind haze which, ever since I saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world."

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
And ever pushed Sir Modred, league by league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonnesse—
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King;
And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burned at his lowest° in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A death-white mist slept over sand and sea,
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear; and even on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,

And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battle-axes on shattered helms, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Looked up for heaven, and only saw the mist;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one death-bed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or through death
Or death-like swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the north, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle. But no man was moving there;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,

And shivered brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King:

"Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as though they had not died for me?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fallen
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be king;
Behold, I seem but king among the dead."

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: "My King!
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as king.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharmed, the traitor of thine house."

Then spake the King: "My house has been my doom.

But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who swore my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, owned me king.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport° of my throne hath failed,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for king.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pass." And uttering this the King
Made at the man. Then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and, all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle rolled°
Among the mountains by the winter sea,
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonnesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land.
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water,° and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"The sequel of to-day unsolders all°

. . . the King
Made at the man . . .

The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Though Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be be,
I am so deeply smitten through the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride; for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I rowed across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known.
But now delay not; take Excalibur,
And fling him° far into the middle mere;
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring me word."

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
"It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten through the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man;

Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word."

So saying, from the ruined shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw; but at the last it seemed
Better to leave Excalibur concealed
There in the many-knotted water-flags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
"Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the ripple washing° in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping° on the crag."

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
"Thou hast betrayed thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseemed
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight;
For surer sign had followed, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief° and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word."

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fixt in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

"And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand

An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying: 'King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely Maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills.'
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were lost."

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,°
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
"What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds."

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
"Ah miserable, and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widowed° of the power in his eye

That bowed the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,°
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence;
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands."

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutched the sword,
And strongly wheeled and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirled in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,°
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur;
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:

"Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out; what is it thou hast heard or seen?"

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not though I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I looked again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandished him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere."

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
"My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die."

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded through his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;

Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him through the place of tombs.

But, as he walked, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sighed the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, "Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die."
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath,° and looking, as he walked,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clashed° his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clanged round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo, the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon!

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these

Three queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmured Arthur, "Place me in the barge."
So to the barge they came. There those three queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shattered casque, and chafed his hands,
And called him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood; for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the withered moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dashed with drops
Of onset;° and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parched with dust,
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,

But she, that rose the tallest of them all
. . . loosed the shatter'd casque and chafed his hands.

Mixt with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shattered column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot through the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
"Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,°
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders° with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world;°
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds."

And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
"The old order changeth,° yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.°
Comfort thyself; what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,

If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
For all my mind is clouded with a doubt—
To the island-valley of Avilion;°
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound."

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol° ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull

Looked one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groaned, "The King is gone."°
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
"From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

Whereat he slowly turned and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag,
Thence marked the black hull moving yet, and cried:
"He passes to be king among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but—if he come no more—
O me, be yon dark queens in yon black boat,
Who shrieked and wailed, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?"

Then from the dawn it seemed there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Even to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

NOTES

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

1. Leodogran, the King of Cameliard. See Malory's *Morte Darthur,* Book I, chapter xvi. Leodogran was one of the petty kings referred to in line 5. **Cameliard** is apparently, according to Wright, the district called Carmelide in the English metrical romance of Merlin. Its location is uncertain.

8. heathen host. Littledale, in his essays on *Idylls of the King,* says, "In the opening lines Tennyson describes very closely the state of affairs which existed in Britain at the time of the landing of Hengist and Horsa,—that great event with which English history begins."

13. first Aurelius. He was a descendant of the last Roman general who claimed the purple as Emperor in Britain. See Green's *Making of England,* pp. 28, 37. He usurped the kingdom from Vortigern and gained some advantages from Hengist, but was overthrown in a final battle. After his death by poison, his brother, Uther, ruled for a time and defeated the Saxons in a number of battles, but at last was poisoned also.

17. puissance. The form of this idyll is more archaic than that of any other except the last. This may be observed often in the choice of words. *Puissance* is a word which was common both in the Old French and Middle English. It came into both languages from the Latin.

17. Table Round. Wace, a French chronicler of the twelfth century, first mentions the Round Table. It was instituted, he says, in the years of peace which intervened between Arthur's conquests and his successful campaign against Lucius of Rome. "All the barons and knights of the civilized world, together with their ladies, flocked to Arthur's court. For the noble barons, each of whom held himself better than any other, and was unwilling to take a place lower than

any other, Arthur made the Round Table, of which the Bretons tell so many stories. At this table his vassals sat in equal dignity. They sat in perfect equality, and they were served in perfect equality. Not one of them could boast of sitting higher than his peers. All were seated with the same honor; no one was distinguished."

26. the wolf would steal, etc. Littledale says, "The description of the wolves stealing and suckling human babes is not only based on myths like the Roman legend, but on the well-authenticated fact in natural history that these animals do sometimes suckle human children that they have carried off. There is, however, no known case of children thus reared arriving at maturity. Quite possibly Tennyson is referring to the lycanthropi of the Greeks and Romans, the loups-garous of the French, and the were-wolves of the Teutons and English."

34. Groaned for the Roman legions. Tennyson here referred to the *Groans of the Britons* of Gildas, who says that the Britons wrote to the Roman Senate after the Roman legions had been withdrawn, that "the barbarians drive us into the sea; the sea throws us back on the barbarians; thus two modes of death await us, we are either slain or drowned."

36. Urien. In the first edition, Tennyson followed Malory and called this king Rience, but later changed it. Geoffrey of Monmouth says that Urien was the brother of Lot. Malory states that he was the husband of Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay, and was a king of North Wales. He wanted Arthur's beard to complete a mantle which he was making from the beards of the kings whom he had slain. Malory, I, xxiv.

39. amazed, in the sense of confused or perplexed.

47. Guinevere. The character of Guinevere appears in many mediæval romances in the French, English and Celtic languages, and is everywhere characterized by beauty, strength and queenly dignity, as well as by the guilty love which has linked her name with that of Lancelot. Tennyson has followed, in the main, the conception of Malory, but has added a charm of gracious womanliness and the benediction of a final repentance and forgiveness from the kingly husband, whom she had so deeply wronged. Two noteworthy modern poems, besides the *Idylls*, dealing with the character of Guinevere are, "The Defence of Guinevere," by William

Morris, and "The Marriage of Guinevere," by Richard Hovey.

50. The golden symbol. The dragon was the symbol of leadership, hence was used as the emblem of royal power and authority. In *Pendragon*, the first syllable was the Welsh word, *pen*, meaning head. Pendragon is attached to the names of both Uther and Arthur in these poems to denote supreme and dread majesty. Cf. "Lancelot and Elaine," lines 430-440, and 526.

59. drave the heathen. Notice the archaic form of the verb. The invading hordes from northern Europe had not yet adopted Christianity, hence are called heathen or pagans. Observe the thoroughness with which Arthur performed his task.

72–73. Gorloïs . . . Anton. These allusions are explained in the passage beginning with line 177. Malory calls Gorloïs the Duke of Tintagil in Cornwall. Anton is the Sir Ector of Malory.

75. Travail. Observe the intensity of feeling indicated by the figurative language of this line, and by the strong expressions in the rest of the passage.

94. he speaks, etc. The poet often speaks of himself, and sometimes of Malory, as "he who tells the tale." This mode of referring to the narrator is common in old French romances.

99. the morning star: Arthur's new-born love for Guinevere, coupled with his eager hope of winning her, quickens all his faculties, mental and physical, alike.

103: long-lanced battle. *Battle* may mean not only the actual conflict of armed forces, but the forces themselves. Robertson says, "The cavalry, by way of distinction, was called the battle, and on it alone depended the fate of every action." In Shakespeare's *Henry V* occurs this passage:

> "Fire answers fire, and through their paly flames
> Each battle sees the other's umber'd face."

Malory, I, xv, says of this conflict: "All these knights rode on afore with spears on their thighs, and spurred their horses mightily as the horses might run. And the eleven kings with part of their knights rushed with their horses as fast as they

might with their spears, and there they did on both parties marvellous deeds of arms."

110. kings. This list of kings is taken from Malory's account of this battle, I, x-xv.

116. As dreadful as, etc. The full force of this simile should be observed.

120. Ho! they yield. In the original story, it is Merlin, not Arthur, who stops the battle. Riding up on a great black horse, he said to Arthur: "Thou hast never done. Hast thou not done enough? Of threestore thousand this day hast thou left on five fifteen thousand, and it is time to say Ho! . . . And therefore withdraw you unto your lodgings, and rest you as soon as you may, and reward your good knights with gold and silver, for they have well deserved it; there may no riches be too dear for them, for so many men as ye have there were never men did more of prowess than they have done to-day, for ye have matched this day with the best fighters of the world."

121. painted battle. Observe the strength and vividness of this simile. A similar expression may be found in Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," lines 117-118.

124. laughed upon his warrior. Picture carefully the setting of this remarkable and dramatic scene between Arthur and Lancelot, and decide what high qualities of character are brought out in each.

129. I know thee for my king. It was this battle that finally settled Arthur's right to the throne, and with it began the splendid career of conquest and statesmanship which Tennyson has pictured so beautifully in these poems. It is true that there is little historic foundation upon which to rest the story of Arthur's brilliant career. But it has become so crystallized in romance and poesy that his name may be written in the list of the world's great mythical heroes.

132. Man's word is God in man. Littledale has paraphrased this pregnant sentence in this way, "A man's promise is a divine thing, therefore it must be regarded as especially sacred." Watch for later references to Arthur's high regard for truth.

133. I trust thee to the death. How well Arthur kept this compact, and how ill Lancelot, should be observed throughout the tales that follow.

134. foughten field. In the first edition of this poem this line read,

"Then Arthur from the field of battle sent."

What improvement, if any, is found in the present reading? **Foughten field** is found several times in Tennyson.

135. Ulfius, Brastias and Bedivere. These three knights were among the first to attach themselves to Arthur, and they remained faithful to him to the end, though they appear only as minor characters in the Idylls. Bedivere it is who, alone of all the Round Table is left to assist Arthur after he has received his mortal wound. The passage, which follows, relating to Arthur's suit for the hand of Guinevere is practically all Tennyson's conception. In Malory, Arthur sends Merlin to Leodogran, who willingly gives Guinevere and sends the great Round Table as a present.

150. Merlin is the central figure in a cycle of mediæval romances and lays. His name is first given as Ambrosius Merlinus, but is afterwards shortened to Merlin. He was noted as a worker of magic and became closely connected with the Arthurian legends as the protector of Arthur, and later as his adviser, friend, and powerful helper. His magic is never at fault and never conquered until he meets Vivien, as portrayed in the sad and tragic Idyll of that name.

155. and wrote. Malory, I, xvii, says: "And there he told how Arthur and the two kings had sped at the great battle, and how it ended, and told the names of every king and knight of worship that was there. And so Bleise wrote the battle, word by word, as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it was ended, and who had the worse. All the battles that were done in Arthur's days Merlin did his master Bleise do write."

160. O friend. Leodogran tells his chamberlain that if Arthur had helped him in battle in the same way the chamberlain had helped him with answers to his questions—that is, not at all, his kingdom would by this time have been destroyed.

166. the cuckoo. Naturalists tell us that the cuckoo is wont to lay its eggs in the nests of other birds, who thus are compelled to assume the care of the young intruders. Sometimes the indignation of the foster-parents is shown by their

chasing the intruder out of the nest and away from the neighborhood.

186. **Tintagil castle.** This castle was located on a picturesque promontory off the Cornish coast. It figures not only in the romance of Gorloïs and Igraine, but also in that of Tristram and Iseult. See Malory, VIII, xiii. For a good description of this interesting place, see Maynadier's *The Arthur of the English Poets*, pp. 184-185.

187. **Ygerne.** In Malory the name appears as Igraine.

189. **Bellicent,** called elsewhere Morgan le Fay, was the daughter of Gorloïs and Igraine, and hence was the half-sister of Arthur.

207. **wrack:** the common form of *wreck* in various Elizabethan writers.

228. **Brought Arthur forth.** See Malory, I, iii-iv, for the story of the miraculous sword by which Arthur proved his right to the succession. Littledale suggests that Tennyson constantly eliminates supernatural and magical incidents from the narrative in order to diminish as much as possible the incongruity arising from the commingling of grotesque mediæval sorcery with solemn Christian mysteries.

244. The kingdom of **Orkney** was in the north of Scotland.

247. **A doubtful throne.** Leodogran likens a doubtful throne to an iceberg, which has drifted into summer seas and which will soon topple over.

252. **body enow:** power enough.

266. **But when he spake.** Many regard the *Idylls* as a great allegory which pictures the struggles of the soul in its higher life, with the evils and temptations of the flesh. If this view is accepted the beautiful description of the coronation scene may be considered as symbolical of the soul starting out upon its earthly career with the intensity of its consecration, its youthful vigor and its divine purity indicated by the heraldic colors, flame-color, green and blue. Through the stained glass windows above his head the benediction of "the crucified" falls upon him. Near by with helpful sympathy, stand the "three fair queens."—the Christian Graces, Faith, Hope and Love, who shall finally receive him, when the course of his life is run, in the funeral barge and conduct him to the fair shore of "Avilion." Tennyson said of persons who adopted this interpretation: "They are right and they are not right.

They [the Queens] mean that and they do not. They are three of the noblest of women. They are also those three Graces, but they are much more. I hate to be tied down to say '*This* means *that*,' because the thought within the image is much more than any interpretation."

279–282. **And there I saw.** In this symbolism, **Merlin** typifies the power of intellect, whose vast, unmeasured stores of wisdom, accumulated through the ages, lend themselves as loyal vassals to his service. The **Lady of the Lake** seems to symbolize religion. **Who knows a subtler magic** than that of Merlin, because the spiritual powers are higher and more powerful than the intellectual. She is clothed in garments of crystalline purity and gives to Arthur the sword of the spirit with which the conquests of righteousness are to be made. The absolute tranquillity of the divine life is shown in the calm depths of her dwelling place, and she walks upon the waters undisturbed by the storms that sweep the seas around her. This description of the Lady of the Lake should be compared with that in "Gareth and Lynette," beginning with line 210.

284. **white samite.** *Samite* comes from a Greek word meaning six-threaded, and was applied originally to a heavy silk material, each thread of which was supposed to be made of six fibers twisted together. Later it came to mean a heavy silk material which had a satin-like gloss.

285. **huge, cross-hilted sword.** In Malory, I, xxiii, is given this account of the gift of the sword, Excalibur, to Arthur. "And, as they rode, Arthur said, I have no sword. No force, said Merlin, hereby is a sword that shall be yours and I may. So they rode until they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and the midst of the lake Arthur was aware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in hand. Lo, said Merlin, yonder is the sword I spoke of. What damsel is that, said Arthur? That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin. . . . Anon withal came the damsel unto Arthur and saluted him and he her again. Damsel, said Arthur, what sword is that, that yonder the arm holdeth above the water? I would it were mine for I have no sword." After which the damsel tells him he may have the sword if he will promise her a gift whenever she shall ask for it. He promises and goes out in a shallop, and takes it.

290. **A voice as of the waters.** See line 380. Cf. "I heard a voice from heaven as the voice of many waters," *Revelation*, xiv, 2.

294. **Excalibur.** The name is said to mean cut steel. For a fuller description of this wonderful sword see "The Passing of Arthur."

298. **elfin Urim.** *Urim* is a Hebrew plural meaning lights or flames, and were supposed to be jewels which were worn by the high priest. **Elfin**, gifted with fairy charms.

299. **blade so bright.** Malory has this sentence, "Then he drew his sword, Excalibur, but it was so bright in his enemies' eyes, that it gave light like thirty torches."

329. **this king is fair.** Bellicent questions the relationship because she and all the family of Gorloïs were dark, as was Uther, but Arthur was light, with golden hair. In "The Last Tournament," lines 661–663, we read,

> "His hair, a sun that rayed from off a brow
> Like hill-snow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
> The golden beard that clothed his lips with light."

362. **fairy changeling.** According to popular superstition, the elves which fairies sometimes left in the place of beautiful children, whom they had stolen, could be distinguished by their shrunken and shrivelled little forms.

379. **a ninth one:** There is a Welsh tradition that the waves are the sheep of a mermaid, and that every ninth one, being larger than the rest, is a ram.

401. **riddling triplets.** The old bardic rhymes were often in triplets. They were riddling because their meaning was hidden. The meaning may be something as follows: Shadow, sunshine, and the rainbow of hope. Arthur will know more when he grows older, and the wits of old men, like Bleys, may wander so that they know not what they speak. Truth may mean one thing to one man and another thing to another, but, however it may be clothed, it will prevail. Life is a mystery and no one knows why the blossom blows. Life begins in the darkness of mystery and into the mystery of darkness it goes.

410. **From the great deep to the great deep he goes.** Cf. "The Passing of Arthur," line 445. There is a belief still current among the peasants of Brittany that Arthur will

awaken out of his sleep and come again. Malory, XXII, vii, says: "Yet some men say in many parts of England that Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu in another place. And men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross. I will not say it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. But many say that there is written upon his tomb this verse:

"'Hic jacet Arthurus Rex quondam Rexque futurus.'"

443. And Leodogran awoke. How is this vision interpreted, and in what way did it influence Leodogran?

447. Sir Lancelot. Malory does not introduce Lancelot until the sixth book, while Tennyson brings him in at the beginning of the action of the poem. This is probably to intensify the strength of the ties that bound him to Guinevere, and to make Lancelot's duplicity all the more heinous. Yet it would seem as if Arthur placed temptation in the way of both, when he sent Lancelot to bring Guinevere to the Court, through a long journey and at the most beautiful season of the year. Perhaps it was necessary to have it so in order to afford some excuse for these two, whose characters were so noble and blameless by nature, to break their binding vows and become faithless to him whom they owed so much of love and service.

452. Dubric was a high church dignitary, being the primate of Britain and the Papal legate, as well as Archbishop of Caerleon-upon-Usk.

454. altar-shrines. Malory states that the king was wedded at Camelot, in the church of St. Stephen's, with great solemnity.

456. The fair beginners, etc. To whom does this refer, and in what sense is it used?

476. Great lords from Rome. Rome had once held possession of Britain and had now sent to collect the customary tribute. This incident of the poem has no historic foundation.

481. Blow trumpet. Stopford Brooke says, with reference to this song: "It embodies the thought of the poem, grips the whole meaning of it together. And its sound is the sound of martial triumph, of victorious weapons in battle, and of knights in arms. We hear in the carefully varied chorus, in

the very rattle and shattering of vowels in the words, the beating of axe on helm and shaft on shield. Rugged, clanging, clashing lines,—it is a splendid effort of art."

511. Roman wall. The Romans built a wall across Britain, not far from the present boundary line between England and Scotland, to protect the southern portion from the barbarians who occupied the country to the north. Even this wall they were unable to protect and defend in the later years of their occupation. A most interesting story of the time is "On the Great Wall," in *Puck of Pook's Hill* by Rudyard Kipling.

517. twelve great battles. According to Nennius, a chronicler of the ninth century, Arthur overcame the barbarians in twelve great battles of which the names are given. In the battle of Castellum Guinnion, Arthur carried on his shoulders the image of the Holy Virgin Mary, and the pagans were put to flight with great slaughter. At the battle of Mount Badon there fell by Arthur's own hand in one day nine hundred and sixty of the heathen.

GARETH AND LYNETTE

This Idyll was published in 1872, and a note says, "With this poem the author concludes the *Idylls of the King*. 'Gareth' follows 'The Coming of Arthur.'"

The first four hundred and thirty lines are original with Tennyson, unless a slight suggestion was found in the story of Peredur in the *Mabinogion*. After that the story follows the account of Malory in the main. This account may be found in the sixth book of *Morte Darthur*, and should be read in connection with the Idyll.

The scene of the poem is conceived as being laid in the springtime, and it is characterized by the freshness and vigor of youth, and the sweetness and beauty of the joyous season. Everywhere is the activity of a new and vigorous life. Arthur is seen on the judgment seat tempering his justice with a mercy which was a stranger to the age. His state is in the process of building, and all his Round Table, rejoicing in the present fulfilment, are looking forward with a larger hope to a greater and more glorious future. Arthur appears here as a great constructive statesman rather than as a warrior as in the preceding Idyll. He is building his state on the broad

foundations of justice and mercy, and is adopting as his watchwords—help for the helpless and rescue for the oppressed.

The shadow of evil has not yet fallen upon the court. The men are brave with the grace of self-denial, and the women are beautiful with the graciousness of virtue and purity.

Gareth is a high-born youth, who is eager for high achievement and confident in his own power to attain the greatest honor. Regardless of all discouragements, he presses cheerfully on until he accomplishes his quest and wins the highest meed of praise. It may be said that, in Gareth, Tennyson has given us his most perfect hero, not even excepting Galahad, for Galahad has no touch of earth, while Gareth is altogether of earth and of the highest type of true manhood.

The poem itself, in its wealth of imagery, its beauty of expression, and its high ideals, is altogether the most delightful of the *Idylls*. It is worthy of study as the joyous beginning of a tale which is destined to end in the gloom of disappointment and death.

2. Gareth. The sons of Lot and Bellicent were Gawain, Agravaine, Gaheris, Modred and Gareth, but only Gawain, Modred, and Gareth figure in the *Idylls*. Malory says that Gareth "was the goodliest young man and the fairest that ever they all saw, and he was large and long and broad in the shoulders and well-visaged, and the fairest and largest-handed that ever man saw."

3. spate: the river in flood. The word is of Celtic origin. Notice the alliteration in these lines In what way does it add to the effectiveness of the passage?

18. yield: in the sense of reward, repay. Cf. *Hamlet,* IV, 5, 41; *Antony and Cleopatra,* IV, 2, 33.

20. discaged. Tennyson often uses these compounds with *dis-, e.g.,* dis-linked, dis-helmed, dis-princed, dis-edged.

21. ever-highering. *Higher* is very rarely used thus. It would almost seem as if Gareth, in his youthful enthusiasm, had invented the word.

40. the goose and the golden eggs. See Tennyson's humorous poem, entitled "The Goose."

46. Book of Hours: an illuminated prayer-book.

47. haunting. The verb haunt is sometimes used intransitively in the sense of visiting often. This use is seen in

"I have charged thee not to haunt about my doors."
—*Othello,* I, 1.

51. leash: a line used to hold hounds or coursing dogs. Among sportsmen it also means a brace and a half, that is, three.

56. clomb is an old form for climbed, but is now obsolete except in poetry.

73. Lot. According to Malory, Lot, who was a brave and powerful king, was slain by King Pellinore, who was later slain by Gawain in revenge for his father's death.

84. red berries charm the bird: a proverbial saying, meaning that they allure the bird in the same way that jousts and wars allure Gareth.

85. jousts: a military contest or spectacle in which two adversaries attacked each other, usually with blunted lances, though sometimes with sharp weapons as in war.

87. often: here used as an adjective, *frequent.*

90. burns. From an old Anglo-Saxon word, meaning a brook. It is used almost exclusively in Scotland and North England.

104. But: only.

105. good lack: an exclamation implying wonder or surprise.

114. Shame. This allegory of Fame and Shame may be compared with Goldsmith's allegory of Guilt and Shame in *The Vicar of Wakefield,* Chap. XV.

122. frequent: frequently.

130. Not an hour, etc. Gareth says, "I will not stay an hour if ye will but yield me permission to go." Is this merely boyish eagerness and petulance, or is it the impatience of a manly spirit fretting to begin its life's work?

139. one. Used in the sense of the same, hence unchanged.

140. She answered. She quotes his words, "Will ye walk through fire? Then will I give you something that will test your determination."

147. quick . . . quick. Notice the play upon words.

150. serve. She thinks that the mere prospect of performing menial tasks for the wage of bed and board alone will be so repugnant to the proud spirit of the prince that he will prefer to stay at home rather than go to the court under

such conditions. But she fails to appreciate his dauntless spirit.

151. kitchen-knaves. Knave, like the German *knabe*, meant originally only a boy, or a servant. Here it is used in its earlier sense and not in its later meaning of a dishonest, rascally fellow.

152. bar: Originally a bar was a barrier or something which was an obstacle to progress. Here it is the counter over which refreshments are served in an inn.

154. a twelvemonth and a day. Not an unusual expression for a year. The extra day was added to make sure of a full measure.

157. villain kitchen-vassalage. *Villain* is from the Latin *villa*, meaning a village, hence a villager or low-born person. It was used in feudalism to indicate the lowest class of serfs. It soon came to mean a man of ignoble character as well as birth. It is interesting to trace the development of the present meaning from the original, in such words, and the student should not fail to do so.

185. Camelot. In the edition of Tennyson's works edited by his son, Vol. III, appears this passage: "The earliest fragment of an epic that I can find among my father's MSS. in my possession was probably written about 1833, and is a sketch in prose. I give it as it stands. 'On the latest limit of the west in the land of Lyonnesse, where, save the rocky isles of Scilly, all is now wild sea, rose the sacred Mount of Camelot. It rose from the deeps with gardens and bowers and palaces, and, at the top of the mount, was King Arthur's hall, and the holy Minster with the Cross of Gold. Here dwelt the King in glory apart, while the Saxons, whom he had overthrown in twelve battles, ravaged the land, and ever came nearer and nearer.

" 'The Mount was the most beautiful in the world, sometimes green and fresh in the beam of the morning, sometimes all one splendor, folded in the golden mists of the West. But all underneath it was hollow, and the mountain trembled, when the seas rushed bellowing through the porphyry caves: and there ran a prophecy that the mountain and the sea on some wild morning would topple into the abyss and be no more.' " The Camelot of the *Idylls* is, of course, purely imaginary, but there has been much speculation as to its possible location. Some authorities make it some twenty miles

southeast of Glastonbury in Somerset, on the steep hill called Cadbury Castle. Others would locate it near Winchester, and still others in Wales.

186. **Far off,** etc. This mystical description of Camelot is one of the finest passages in the *Idylls*. In ease and grace of diction; the choice of words, which clearly express the exact shade of meaning; in vivid and delicately colored imagery; in its rare and beautiful symbolism and the smooth flow of musical cadences the passage is hardly excelled in the whole range of English poetry. Cf. the lyrics in the *Princess*.

207. **To plunge old Merlin,** etc. Gareth may here refer to the old belief that it was possible to destroy the sorceries of a magician by plunging him into the waters of certain seas. The Red Sea was believed to be specially efficacious.

212. **The Lady of the Lake.** The description which follows seems clearly intended to be allegorical, and may be interpreted as follows: The Lady of the Lake represents true religion. Although, in person, she takes but little part in the action of the poem, she stands as the sponsor and protector of the king. She gives him his sword to show that his authority and power are derived from and based on divine justice. She is present at his wedding, and thus gives sanction to the institution of marriage. And when his life approaches its visible ending, she receives back the sword, and thus confers upon him the blessing of immortality.

Her dress ripples away like water to show that the forms of religion are ever changing.

Her arms, **like the cross,** support the cornice, thus showing that the substance of religion is unchanging, and that it is a strong foundation and support of all civilization.

The **drops of water** symbolize the life-giving and refreshing influences of religion.

The **sword** is the emblem of divine justice.

A **censer** symbolizes the purifying and sweetening influences of religion.

Worn with wind and storm. The world antiquity of religion.

The sacred fish. The fish was the emblem of Christ, and is found cut in the tombs in the catacombs and other burial places of the early Christians. The initial letters of Jesus

Christ, Son of God, Savior, in the Greek, form the Greek word which means fish.

Arthur's wars carved around. The warfare of right against wrong, of the ideal against the evils of the world, all centers about religion.

New things and old. Ancient conflicts are always repeating themselves in new forms. We are confused unless we remember that the differences in time are as nothing, for the deep principles of the strife are the same.

The **three queens** may be taken to represent Faith, Hope, and Charity. But see note l. 266, "The Coming of Arthur."

223. inveterately: from two Latin words which mean substantially for the ages. *Veteran* comes from the same root.

229. dragon-boughts are the coiled and knotted tails of dragons.

236. an ancient man: Merlin.

248. Seer: This word is used in the sense of one who sees visions and thus may foretell the future.

248. playing on him. The old man spoke half in earnest and half mockingly.

249. seen the good ship. There is a curious mirage, which is sometimes seen at the seashore, where ships are reflected upside down in the sky. This phenomenon is most frequently witnessed in Calabria, in Italy where the natives say it is the work of the fairy Morgana, the Morgan le Fay of the Arthurian legends.

252. And here is truth. A mocking reference to the untruth told by Gareth.

256. sacred mountain cleft. Merlin's speech is mystical and symbolical. The building of the city may represent the growth of civilization, especially in its higher spiritual and æsthetic phases. The fairy king and fairy queens, who have come from the sacred mountain-cleft, that is, Mount Parnassus, are the arts, mythologies and religions, which have come from the east to wield their potent influences upon the upbuilding of spiritual life. It is built to music because to be complete it must be harmonious in all its parts, and harmony is the soul of music. (In this connection the student should read Browning's "Abt Vogler.")

261. King. Merlin contends that the King, that is, the soul, is the living reality, and that all else is fading and transi-

tory. It is, therefore, a shame not to be governed by the high ideals of the soul, and yet they are so high that they are not possible of mortal attainment.

273. never built at all. Civilization never ceases to develop, yet it never attains that perfection beyond which there can be no farther growth.

275. reverence thine own beard. The white beard should be a symbol of truth. Gareth is confused and puzzled, and concludes that Merlin is making fun of him.

293. Let love be blamed, etc. Notice the confusion in his grammar in this line.

298. did their days in stone. Wrought the history of their reigns in the solid stones of the city.

299. Merlin's hand. Many great works were ascribed to the art and magic of Merlin. One of the greatest was the building of Arthur's palace at Camelot. Other works were Stonehenge, the palace of Uther Pendragon, and four magic fountains. Reference is made to these fountains in different mediæval romances. One of these fountains is referred to by Ariosto in *Orlando Furioso:*

> "This spring was one of those four fountains rare,
> Of those in France produced by Merlin's sleight,
> Encompassed round about by marble fair,
> Shining and polished, and than milk more white.
> There in the stone choice figures chiselled were,
> By that magician's godlike labor dight."

302. spire to heaven. To show its divine aspirations.

306. And out of bower. The student should observe the wholesome life of the city while it is following the example and leadership of the king, and see how it deteriorates and grows evil as it gradually separates itself from his high ideals under the influence of the queen and her guilty love for Lancelot. The *Idylls* may be called the epic of a sin.

314. doom: judgment or justice. Originally it was used in a neutral sense, but now it implies an adverse decision or condemnation. Gareth was frightened lest his imposture should be discovered and punished.

319. Sir Gawain. Why should he fear to meet Sir Gawain or Sir Modred?

333. Whether would ye? Another of the archaic expres-

sions in which this Idyll abounds. It means, "Which will ye choose?"

343. **Thine enemy.** What light does this passage throw upon the character of the king?

351. **standeth seized:** an old legal expression the meaning of which is clear enough.

359. **Sir Kay:** the foster-brother of Arthur, and the cynic of the Court.

362. **gyve and gag.** In former times scolding women were bound to a ducking-stool and a sort of iron muzzle or mask fastened to their faces. This is probably what Sir Kay refers to.

367. **Aurelius Emrys.** *Emrys* is the Celtic form of Aurelius, referred to in "The Coming of Arthur," line 13.

369. **rough humor.** The use of **humor** in this connection is interesting, and should be looked up.

376. **Mark.** Tennyson makes Mark the embodiment of hypocrisy and thus the antitype of Arthur.

380. **charlock** was a common name for wild mustard, whose abundant blossoms were of a pale but brilliant yellow.

383. **Delivering:** giving the news, reporting. Cf. Macbeth's letter, *Macbeth* I, 5.

386. **cousin:** used in the sense of kinsman. According to Malory Tristram was the son of Mark's sister. Tristram is the hero of a romantic cycle hardly less interesting and comprehensive than that of Arthur. See Arnold's "Tristram and Iseult," Swinburne's "Tristram of Lyonnesse," Wagner's "Tristram and Isolde," and Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Tristram." Mark's idea was that, because he was of higher rank than Tristram, he was entitled all the more to this high honor of knighthood.

411. **reave:** deprive. This verb is still found in *bereave*, and in the participle *reft*.

422. **lap him up in cloth of lead:** referring to the custom of wrapping a dead body in a sheet of lead.

425–426. **No fault . . . satisfied.** To whom are these two lines of the speech addressed?

430. **evermore:** each time.

431. **Last, Gareth.** From this point Tennyson follows the narrative of Malory.

436. I seem. Why does Gareth use this word instead of *am?*

442. thine: thy master.

444. Wan-sallow: pale and sickly, as a plant which feels its roots attacked by some parasite.

447. God wot. *Wot* is the first and third personal form of the old verb *witan,* "to know," which is not now in use, except in the single set form "to wit." **brewis.** An old English form of *broth.* It comes from or is associated with the verb *brew.*

448. an: an archaic form of *and,* meaning if.

451. Lancelot. The attitudes of Lancelot and Kay towards Gareth are characteristic of the two men. Kay is narrow-minded, cynical, and wholly uncharitable, while Lancelot is broadly tolerant and trustful, the flower of chivalry, and, so far, at least, the embodiment of every virtue. The student should watch for any signs of deterioration in the character of Lancelot as the action progresses, and try to discover the cause.

452. sleuth-hound: *Sleuth* means the track of a beast or a man, and a *sleuth-hound* is one that follows such a trail by scent. The name is commonly applied to a bloodhound.

454. fluent: *flowing,* not often used in such connection.

461. will poison, etc. The reference may be to the death of King Aurelius, one of Arthur's predecessors, who died of poison.

465. Sir Fair-hands. Malory, VII, i, makes Kay say: ". . . for I dare undertake he is villain born, and never will make man, for and he had come of gentlemen, he would have asked you of horse and armour, but such as he is, so he asketh. And since he has no name, I shall give him a name that shall be Beaumains, that is Fair-hands, and into the kitchen I shall bring him."

476. broach: originally any sharp-pointed thing, hence a spit upon which meat was roasted before the fire.

489. tarns: *tarn* is an early English and Scotch word, meaning a small mountain lake or pool, especially one which has no visible feeders.

490. Caer-Eryri. Littledale says that this is a Welsh word which means literally Snowdon Field. Snowdon is a mountain in Wales, and is the highest in either Wales or England. It

is noted for its grandeur and the extensive view which may be had from its summit.

491. A naked babe. This is still another form of the legend of Arthur's birth.

492. Isle Avilion: The Isle of the Apples was the paradise of the Celts. It has been located at Glastonbury, but in Tennyson its location is very vague. See "The Passing of Arthur," lines 428–432.

496. roundelay: any song in which a line or refrain is frequently repeated. The songs of birds are frequently spoken of in poetry as roundelays.

498. prodigious is usually applied to something immensely or unbelievably large, but here means strange or wonderful.

501. gap-mouthed. Notice how aptly the unusual expression conveys the desired meaning.

504. like a sudden wind, etc. The student should make a careful study of Tennyson's similes with a special view to their appropriateness and sources. To what extent do they show that he was a careful student and observer of nature?

508. by two yards, etc. Malory, VII, ii, says, "And when there were any masteries done thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards."

519. in-crescent and de-crescent. Would there be any difference in the meaning of these words if they were written without hyphens? *Increase* and *decrease* came from the same original words. Has not Tennyson used an unnecessarily roundabout expression?

524. ragged oval: The lists in which tournaments were ridden were oval in shape. Ragged means uneven or with ragged edges. Doubtless the poet is here recollecting the pastimes of his own childhood. "The boys played great games, like Arthur's knights; they were champions and warriors defending a stone-heap; or, again, they would set up opposing camps with a king in the midst of each. The king was a willow wand stuck into the ground, with an outer circle of immortals to defend him of firmer, stiffer sticks. Then each party would come with stones, hurling at each other's king, and trying to overthrow him."—RITCHIE.

528. Peter's knee: a figurative expression meaning to the gates of heaven, as Peter was known as the guardian or gatekeeper of heaven.

529. news. This word was originally a plural, and thus might be used with the plural adjective. Notice the incoherence of his speech. What does it indicate with regard to his state of mind?

532. staggered. Cf. line 29 of this Idyll.

536. the King's calm eye. In Malory there is no hint that the king knew Gareth's identity. Gareth asks two boons of the king, that he shall grant him this adventure, and that he may receive knighthood at the hands of Lancelot. The king grants both, and Lancelot knights Gareth after a passage at arms in which neither gains the advantage and in which Gareth announces himself to Lancelot.

561. Have I not earned, etc. A jesting allusion to his kitchen service.

568. quest is used here as a term of chivalry and means a going out in search of knightly adventure. On Arthur's lips it means an adventure undertaken for the sake of righting some wrong.

571. the lions on thy shield. Cf. "Lancelot and Elaine," line 658, "Sir Lancelot's azure lions crowned in gold."

575. May-blossom. In England this name is given to the lily of the valley, which flower is probably meant here because of its waxen whiteness. It also is given to the haw, which blossoms in May and is also white.

577. Tip-tilted: a rare word, possibly one of Tennyson's own coining. Notice here as elsewhere the grace and accuracy with which the poet adapts his words to the meaning which he desires to express. He was always an artist in his choice and use of words.

579. for. Used as a conjunction only to introduce an independent clause or sentence, giving a reason for or justification for something previously said. It means in such connection, *since*.

582. The lord of half a league: Every noble is practically confined to his tower by the bandits.

584. lonest. Lone, abbreviated from alone, is not subject to comparison either in form or sense. Is anything gained by the use of this forced superlative?

586. that best blood: the wine of the sacrament which is symbolical of the blood of Christ.

592. Lynette. In Malory's account, the maiden refuses to

give the name of the one for whom she desires to secure succor and Arthur refuses to send one of his knights, upon which Gareth rushes in and demands the quest for himself. In what way, if any, is Tennyson's version an improvement?

noble: in the sense of high-born.

593. **Lyonors.** In Malory, this lady is named **Liones.**

596. **Castle Perilous.** "The old romances contain many such names as Castle Perilous. Thus in *Morte Darthur,* we find the Forest Perilous, the Chapel Perilous, the Perilous Lake, the Siege Perilous, and this Castle Perilous, near the Isle of Avilion."—LITTLEDALE.

603. **purport.** This word is not a synonym for purpose, although it is used here in much the same sense. Observe the different derivations of the two words.

607. **holy life.** To wed a holy life means to become a nun, that is "a bride of Christ." In this connection read "St. Agnes' Eve."

610. **this Order.** See the passage in "Guinevere" beginning with line 457.

614. **old knight-errantry:** the old knights, who roamed the country without restraint of law or high purpose before the foundation of the Round Table.

616. **from the moment:** as the impulse of the moment may impel them.

618. **fantasy:** the older form of fancy. Here a whim or caprice.

619. **Morning Star,** etc. The three substantives in this line are in apposition with Day in the preceding. This conceit of the men is in the form of an allegory of human life in which they represent, respectively, youth, middle age, old age, and death.

626. **scape,** not 'scape. This is an independent form in use during the Elizabethan age.

639. **worthy to be knight.** What qualities in Gareth called forth this exclamation from the king?

642. **slew the may-white:** her forehead flushed with anger

651. **gave upon a range:** opened upon or commanded a view.

657. **But one was counter:** the other was opposite to the hearth.

658. highest-crested, etc. The knight in full armor, with loftiest crest, could ride through.

669. a fuel-smothered fire: a replenished fire looks half dead until the fresh fuel catches and suddenly bursts into full flame; Gareth cast off his outer robe of service and appeared in the full brilliancy of a new and glittering armor.

671. Dull-coated things. Cf. Tennyson's "The Two Voices:"

> "To-day I saw the dragon-fly
> Come from the wells where he did lie
> An inner impulse rent the vail
> Of his old husk: from head to tail
> Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.
> He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
> Through crofts and pastures wet with dew
> A living flash of light he flew."

677. storm-strengthened. It was customary to take the wood for spears and bows from trees that stood alone by themselves in some exposed place where they had had no protection from the storms, because the fibre of such trees was tougher and more durable than that of trees which grew in the midst of a forest.

678. trenchant: keen-edged, sharp.

686. but as the cur. The following note on this passage was made by Mr. Tennyson's son: "When we lived in Kent we had two large dogs, one a large white one, an uneducated ruffian always chained to an apple tree, the other a larger black one, and much more of a gentleman. One day while I was passing with this last too near the tree, the white one seized hold of him and tore his ear. Then followed a duel. I separated them with some difficulty, and then took my dark friend on a walk of some six miles. All the way out and half the way back he growled and swore to himself about every five minutes."

693. the King hath past his time: The king is in his dotage.

695. For an your fire, etc. Notice the play upon the literal and figurative meanings of the word *fire*.

700. Crazed. To whom does Kay refer in ll. 697–700?

703. peacocked. The peacock is the symbol of vanity and

the verb derived from it means puffed up with pride in one's appearance.

706. **so.** Used in a conditional sense and equivalent to *provided.*

715. **ye are overfine.** See line 466. In what sense does Sir Kay use the word fine?

729. **agaric:** a kind of fungus growth which is sometimes found on trees in some parts of Europe. **holt** is an old Saxon word meaning a wood. It is not now in use except occasionally in poetry.

730. **carrion** comes from a Latin word *caro* which means flesh, but has come to mean a dead and putrefying body. Our adjective *carnal* comes from the same root.

732. **shrilling.** *Shrill* used as a verb is equivalent to the Scottish *skirl,* and means to utter a keen, high-pitched sound.

733. **Avoid.** Used in the sense of *avaunt,* and implies contempt and abhorrence.

738. **ungentle.** "And right as Beaumains overtook the damsel, right so came Sir Kay, and said, Beaumains, what, know ye not me? Then he turned his horse and knew it was Sir Kay, that had done him all the despite as ye have heard before. Yea, said Beaumains, I know you for an ungentle knight of the court, and therefore beware of me."—*Morte Darthur,* VII, iv.

751. **loon.** From an Anglo-Saxon word meaning a clownish fellow. Cf. Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner," line 11.

766. **beknaved:** called knave.

771. **spit.** She sarcastically calls his sword a spit, with reference to his kitchen service.

779. **eagle-owl.** "The comparison between the pool gleaming red in the twilight, and the eye of an eagle-owl, burning round and bright in the darkness, may have the fault of being too uncommon to really illustrate the description, but it is a simile that an ornithologist can appreciate. Indeed, a book might be written on the bird-lore of Tennyson, as has been well done by Mr. Harting in the case of Shakespeare."—LITTLEDALE.

791. **haling:** the older form of hauling.

796. **oilily bubbled.** Notice how the sound suggests the meaning.

799. **caitiff:** an epithet of a false knight.

804. wan: Originally this word meant dark, gloomy, when applied to the weather or to water, as here. Later it came to mean colorless, sickly of hue. Cf. "The Passing of Arthur," line 129.

806. grimly. Now obsolete. It is used occasionally to describe ghosts.

807. Good now. Littledale says, "Good is probably used as a form of address, 'my good sir, now,' as in *Hamlet*."

815. a light laugh, etc. Lynette laughs in derision at the knight's reference to Arthur's Table. Tennyson frequently uses this play on words. The student should observe Lynette's attitude towards Gareth and especially the signs of change as she begins to show an increasing interest and a more tolerant spirit.

820. rout: a crowd of people in disorder.

828. cate: a delicacy.

829. a peacock in his pride. "At table, peacocks were never introduced, except on the most important and magnificent occasions: and he who carved them was considered honored in the highest degree. The feathers from the tail of the peacock were formed by ladies of quality into a crown, for the purpose of decorating their favorite troubadours or minstrels. The eyes were considered to represent the attention of the whole world fixed upon them. And in those days of chivalry, so constantly was the peacock the object of the solemn vows of the knights, that its image was hung up in the place, where they exercised themselves in the management of their horses and weapons; and before it, when roasted and dressed in its plumage, and placed with great pomp and ceremony, as the top dish, at the most splendid feasts, all the guests, male and female, took a solemn vow: the knights vowing bravery, and the ladies engaging to be loving and faithful." Littledale further says, "Tennyson does not introduce this dainty dish without a purpose: Lynette is to be reminded by the peacock in his pride that ladies should be loving and kind to their champions—a lesson she stands rather in need of."

839. frontless: without shame or modesty.

862. avail: profit.

871. Lion and stoat. It has often happened that wild animals under influence of terror have taken refuge together

in some safe place, and the weaker ones have forgotten their fears. The comparison between the lion and the stoat is an interesting one. The lion is high-born and the stoat, or the weasel, is an outcast.

873. **ruth:** compassion for the misery of another.

882. **Among the ashes.** Is the story of Cinderella, as referred to here, an anachronism?

889. **Lent-lily:** The daffodil is so called because it blooms in Lent. It is also sometimes called the Lent-rose.

896. **Sir Morning Star.** This passage is probably in some degree allegorical, though it may be read as a purely romantic adventure. Mr. Tennyson said in referring to certain reviews of the *Idylls*, which laid special stress upon their allegorical significance, "They have taken my hobby and ridden it too hard, and have explained some things too allegorically, although there is an allegorical or perhaps rather a parabolic drift in the poem. . . . There is no single fact or incident in the *Idylls*, however seemingly mystical, which cannot be explained without any mystery or allegory whatever."—Tennyson's *Works*, Vol. III. (Edited by Hallam, Lord Tennyson.) Mr. Elsdale has stated the allegory as follows: "The serpent river is the stream of time. Its three long loops the three ages of life,—youth, middle age, old age. The guardians of the crossings are the personified forms of the temptations suited to these different ages."

908. **Avanturine:** Avanturine, sometimes called the panther-stone is a kind of gray-green or brown quartz with sparkles in it. The first reading was—

"Like stars within the stone avanturine."

"This simile was taken from a fine piece of the stone Avanturine, kept in an étui-case belonging to my mother. 'Look at it,' my father said, 'see the stars in it, worlds within worlds.' "—Tennyson's *Works*, Vol. III, p. 465.

934. **lightly:** in the sense of quickly. Malory, VII, xii, has the expression, "lightly they avoided their horses."

970. **she sang.** "Lynette has now seen that Gareth is a gentleman and no knave, and admiration of his valor awakens a different feeling in her heart. Her songs conceal rather than reveal this dawning love: maiden modesty will

not permit her to abate one jot of her missayings and revilings.

"Her first song indicates the sudden light that has dawned upon her: her morning dream has once proved true—that her love would smile upon her that day.

"She urges Gareth to take her counsel, but ends with seeming scorn: 'Care not for shame: thou art not knight but knave.' However, she answers him reasonably when he remonstrates with her.

"After the Sun is overthrown, her love has smiled upon her twice: her dream that she would find a victorious champion that day—a knight who would achieve her quest and become her love—has twice been proved true. Her revilings take a more mocking, but less bitter tone. What does he know of flowers save as garnitures of dishes: or of birds, save when turning on a spit! But there is no trace of scorn of Gareth in her proud reply to Sir Evening Star. . . . Thrice hath her dream come true—or rather, three omens have proved her dream true—her dream of a victorious and loving champion."—LITTLEDALE.

1001. Noonday Sun. In Malory, the second knight was a green knight. The symbolism does not appear in the original story.

1002. flower: the dandelion.

1008. brother. He thinks Gareth is his brother because he carries the shield of the Morning Star.

1048. rosemaries and bay. It was customary to garnish meats, when they formed the chief dish at the table, with these aromatic herbs.

1052. mavis: the song thrush. **merle:** the common blackbird. These birds are all song birds. Does this fact add a sting to her raillery?

1067. hardened skins. This wrapping represents the unyielding nature of evil habits which have been forming through a lifetime.

1075. disaster. Study of this word in an unabridged dictionary will make clear to the student Lynette's figure of speech.

1107. Well done. Lynette now definitely abandons her reviling, and shows her interest, not only in the issue of the conflict, but in the welfare of her knight.

1117. **Southwesterns:** the southwest gales.

1118. **buoy** is the object of *could bring under* understood.

1130. **trefoil:** the three-leaved clover. Three conflicts have been won.

1141. **Hast mazed my wit.** She finds herself at a loss to understand the situation. Arthur had apparently scorned her in giving her his kitchen-knave as a champion. The knave has proved himself brave and knightly, yet is no knight. She shows herself a lady of true instincts by acknowledging her error, and Gareth proves his magnanimity by meeting her in the same spirit.

1156. **Lets down his other leg:** The heron, when resting, stands on one leg, but when he gets ready to fly, he puts down the other leg so he may spring from the ground with sufficient force to enable him to begin his flight.

1163. **comb:** a Welsh word meaning a hollow between two hills. It is used only in southwestern England and Wales and a part of Ireland.

> "From those heights
> We dropped at pleasure into sylvan combs."
> —WORDSWORTH, "Excursion," iii.

1172. **vexillary:** standard-bearer in the Roman legion. Such an inscription was carved on a cliff that overhangs the river Gelt in Cumberland, near Brampton. Remains of the inscription may still be seen. They were well known to Tennyson.

1174. **Phosphorus,** etc. The Latin names for Morning Star, Noonday, Evening, Night, and Death.

1179. **cave.** The soul chased by these five personations of time is flying to the cave where he may be safe under the protection of religion.

1273. **Ramp,** etc. The lions on Lancelot's shield. Cf. line 571.

1277. **from my hold on these.** He gains **virtue** and **fire** from his hold on the lion-blazoned shield.

1281. **Arthur's Harp:** a star which lies near the pole-star and Arcutrus, the three forming a triangle likened unto a harp. It is referred to in "The Last Tournament," line 331.

1313. **Thus—and not else:** The passage means: If Lan-

celot fights for his shield he will probably win it, as he is the stronger man, but I shall not yield it in any other way.

1314. **urged all the devisings:** told all the devices.

1318. **fineness.** In the sense of *finesse, stratagem.*

1347. **With white breast-bone:** with breastbone and bare ribs painted white on his armor.

1348. **And crowned with fleshless laughter:** crowned with a grinning skull.

1367. **blink the terror:** shrink from looking at it.

1378. This episode, as well as all the allegorical part of the three battles which preceded, is Tennyson's. In Malory, the last champion is the hardest to conquer and he is overcome only after a long and desperate battle. It might be questioned whether it would have been possible for Gareth to cleave the helm asunder and still leave the head within unharmed. The allegory may mean that death, which seems the most formidable, is easily conquered and yields to a fresh new life. Or it may mean, as Littledale suggests, that Gareth had found his most terrible opponent give place to love.

1392, 1394. **he that told the tale.** The first,—Malory; the second,—Tennyson himself.

THE MARRIAGE OF GERAINT

The Geraint Idylls are based on the romance of Geraint, the Son of Erbin, in the Mabinogion, and none of the incidents are to be found in Malory. The Mabinogion is a general title given by Lady Charlotte Guest to twelve tales which she translated from the Welsh, and which were found in a fourteenth century manuscript, called *The Red Book of Hergest.* This book is now published in cheap form in *Everyman's Library*, and should be read by all students who are interested in the old tales connected with the Arthurian cycle.

These two Idylls were originally one, but were separated in the second edition of Tennyson's works. The original Idyll, known as "Enid," was much longer than the other; but, by the division, the attention was better concentrated upon the two chief incidents.

The first 144 lines of the first Idyll really belong to the second, but as a result of their introduction at the beginning,

the interest is aroused by the plunge into the middle of the story.

29. A horror: The shadow of the one sin which was to overturn all the work of the great king and destroy the Round Table is already beginning to fall, and all the sufferings of this tale may be traced to it.

39. common sewer of all his realm. This line is repeated in "Geraint and Enid," line 894. Observe how much stronger and more vivid the figurative expression is than any plain statement.

40. fair permission. *Fair* is used in the sense of *gracious* or *free.*

49. worship. This word is now commonly used to denote adoration or homage paid to God or some deity. It was formerly used to mean fervent admiration directed towards any one.

50. Forgetful, etc. This striking repetition of the single word in five lines adds much to the beauty as well as to the strength and vividness of the passage. It is used with striking effect in a number of passages in the Mabinogion.

60. molten is the old past participle form of the verb to melt. Observe the strength of the word. The people imagine that his manhood is not only gone, but is broken up and fused beyond hope of rehabilitation. **Uxoriousness** is an excessive and foolish fondness for one's wife.

68. taint. Cf. line 31.

77. As slopes, etc. Tennyson himself says, "I made this simile from a stream, and it is different, though like Theocritus, *Idyll*, XXII, 48 ff." When some one objected that he had taken this simile from Theocritus, he answered: "It is quite different. Geraint's muscles are not compared to the rounded stones, but to the stream pouring vehemently over them."—Tennyson's *Works*, Vol. III, p. 469. The passage from Theocritus referred to is

> "Broad were his shoulders, vast his orbed chest,
> And nigh the shoulder on each brawny arm
> Stood out the muscles, huge as rolling stones
> Caught by some rain-swollen river and shapen smooth
> By its wild eddyings."

The student should make a critical comparison of the two passages.

116. For all my pains, etc. In spite of all his precautions, his separation from Arthur's court, his enforced isolation from all warlike activities and the defences which his jealous love had erected, still she had become tainted and had fallen in love with some knight in Arthur's court. Geraint's treatment of the innocent Enid should be compared with the high magnanimity which the great Arthur was later to show toward the guilty Guinevere.

124. hurled. The first edition has "snatched." Contrast the two words.

126. palfrey: an ordinary riding horse as distinguished from a war horse.

128. spurs are yet to win: referring to the slights which had been put upon him because of his inactivity.

136. cedarn. Cf. oaken.

138. sprigs of summer. It is even now the custom to put away clothes for the summer with sprigs of lavender or other sweet-smelling herbs placed between them.

145. For Arthur, etc. The monarchs of England and France were accustomed to hold courts on the great anniversaries of Easter, Whitsuntide, and Christmas.

145. Whitsuntide comprises the week following Whitsunday, which is the seventh Sunday after Easter. It takes its name from the white garments worn by the candidates for baptism.

146. Caerleon upon Usk. The traditional seat of Arthur's government. It was located in Monmouthshire, three miles northeast of Newport.

148. forester of Dean. The forest of Dean was an extensive tract in Gloucestershire beyond the Severn. In the original story, the forester said to Arthur, "In the Forest I saw a stag, the like of which beheld I never yet." "What is there about him?" asked Arthur, "that thou never yet didst see his like?" "He is of pure white, Lord, and he does not herd with any other animal through stateliness and pride, so royal is his bearing."

158. dreaming, etc. This passage does not appear in the original. Tennyson introduces it here in order to show the gradual growth of the evil and its reflection in the increasing contentions of the court.

185. Cavall. Arthur's dog, Cavall, is one of the noted

dogs of history or tradition. The tradition is current that one day, when Arthur was hunting a wild boar with his dog, Cavall left a footprint upon a flat stone. Thereupon Arthur built a cairn and placed the stone with the footprint on top of it. It is said that one may carry away the stone to ever so great a distance, but the next day it is back in place again.

213. **Wroth to be wroth:** angry because he had permitted himself to become angry at such a vile creature.

217. **this vermin to their earths.** This use of *vermin* as both a collective and a plural is unusual even at the time of which Tennyson is writing. The word means from its origin a worm, but has been applied to any noxious insect or animal. It was commonly applied to such animals as rats, mice, otters, weasels, and polecats. Perhaps Geraint had this last-named unsavory animal in mind. **Earths** is the conventional word for *holes*, used as a term of the chase.

220. **for pledge.** Some article of value being left as security for payment.

230. **a beggar from the hedge.** Cf. line 724. Also read in this connection Tennyson's early poem, "King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid."

235. **vile:** of small price, hence mean, contemptible.

255. **hostel.** Hospital and hotel are other forms of the same word. It means a house of entertainment.

262. **the dusty sloping beam:** a beam of light from the setting sun.

273. **spleen:** anger. The spleen has been supposed to be the seat of various emotions.

274. **pips.** Littledale suggests that Geraint was not informed concerning diseases of chickens, as pips is a disease which attacks the tongue and cannot in any way be said to eat up "your sparrow-hawk."

306. **passion.** The word meant originally *suffering*. Here it is used in the sense of *eagerness*.

319. **wilding.** This word may be either a noun or an adjective. Is it more effective here than the simple word *wild* would have been?

322. **monstrous ivy-stems.** In England the ivy grows luxuriantly and sometimes fully answers the description given here.

330. lander: one who lands. An unusual word, but not coined by Tennyson as some have suggested.

336. liquid note beloved of men. The nightingale is famous for its beautiful song. It winters in Africa and arrives in England the first or second week in April, where its coming is eagerly awaited by bird lovers.

339. coppice: copse, a wood or thicket composed of small trees or bushes. Chaucer spoke of the colors of young trees in the springtime.

"Some very red, and some a glad light green."

344. Here, by God's grace. The triteness of Geraint's introduction to Enid by a song is lost in the classic beauty of the passage and its wealth of simile and allusion.

345. the song. Stopford Brooke in his *Tennyson*, page 289, says, "And Enid sings that song of fortitude in poverty, of the mastery of the soul in good or evil fortune, which is so finely written that it speaks the very soul of enduring manhood and womanhood all over the world. There is as much strength as there is beauty in the whole scene; and the two comparisons of the effect on Geraint of Enid's voice are one of the noblest instances we can give of that sweet keen delicacy in Tennyson which, in contrast with his bluff power, is so pleasant a surprise."

364. vermeil-white: vermeil means a bright red or vermilion. The whole expression means white tinged with red.

368. God's rood. Rood at first meant a rod, but came to mean a crucifix. The word appears in the name of the royal palace in Edinburgh, Holyrood.

386. a costrel: a small vessel of wood, leather, or earthenware. In the Mabinogion the story runs as follows: "And, behold! the maiden came back, and a youth with her, bearing on his back a costrel full of good purchased mead, and a quarter of young bullock. And in the hands of the maiden was a quantity of white bread, and she had some manchet bread in her vail, and she came into the chamber. 'I could not obtain better than this,' said she, 'nor with better should I have been trusted.' 'It is good enough,' said Geraint. And they caused the meat to be boiled; and when their food was ready they sat down."

389. manchet bread: a small roll or loaf of bread made from the finest and whitest wheat flour. The word is now obsolete.

412. under-shapen: a word of rare use, meaning undersized or dwarfish.

419. They take. Cf. line 276.

443. wild land: the territory which had not yet been brought to order by Arthur.

451. Affirming. The account in the Mabinogion is essentially different: "I had a nephew, son of my brother, and I took his possessions to myself; and when he came to his strength, he demanded of me his property, but I withheld it from him. So he made war upon me, and wrested from me all I possessed." Tennyson makes the young man wholly a wanton aggressor.

481. Except the lady he loves best, etc. This condition was often imposed upon a knight in mediæval times before he would be admitted to a tourney or sometimes even to a castle.

513. prove her heart: find out her feelings.

543. Chair of Idris. Idris was one of the three primitive bards of Wales and was the reputed inventor of the harp. The Chair of Idris, Cader-Idris, next to Snowdon, is the highest mountain in Wales. Cf. Arthur's Seat, near Edinburgh.

593–596. In the first edition this passage reads:

> "And, being young, he changed himself and grew
> To hate the sin, that seemed so like his own,
> Of Modred, Arthur's nephew, and fell at last
> In the great battle fighting for the King."

The great battle was the last one, described in "The Passing of Arthur," in which practically all the knights of the Round Table who still remained faithful were killed.

598. low splendor. Does this refer to the rising or setting of the sun?

631. All branched, etc.: with branches and flowers gold-embroidered on it.

641. sold and sold: sold one after another.

654. And dreamt herself, etc. This beautiful and pathetic dream does not appear in the Mabinogion. In the

Idylls, Tennyson has given us three beautiful, sweet, and pure women, Lynette, Enid, and Elaine. He has also given us three of a different type, Guinevere, Vivien, and Etarre. The student should study and individualize these characters. The humility, patience, and sweetness of Enid, together with her generous and unchanging love, make her one of the noteworthy female characters of all poetry.

661. a turkis. One of the old spellings of *turquoise*. Its color is blue, while that of the garnet is red.

672. mixen: an obsolete word meaning a dunghill.

712. noble maintenance: the maintaining of a fitting state for a noble family.

724. a ragged-robin: a red wild flower which is common in English hedgerows. Probably her mother is thinking of a ragged beggar maiden by the wayside.

730. those of old. In the book of Esther, we read that, after the banishment of Vashti from the royal presence, the King Ahasuerus appointed officers in all the provinces of his kingdom to gather together all the fair young women, and bring them into the presence of the king that he might select the fairest to become his queen. Enid's mother thinks that even though search were made throughout Arthur's realm, a maid fairer than Enid could not be found.

743. Whom Gwydion, etc. The tale is from the Mabinogion. "They took the blossoms of the oak, and the blossoms of the broom, and the blossoms of the meadow-sweet, and produced from them a maiden, the fairest and most graceful that man ever saw. And they baptized her, and gave her the name of Blodenwedd."

744. bride of Cassivelaun. "Milton tells us that it was the desire of British pearls that led the Roman Cæsar to invade Britain, but the laureate follows the more poetic Welsh tradition, that it was for the love of a fair British maiden named Flur, who was beloved also by the British chieftain Cassivelaunus. Flur had been carried away by a Gaulish prince, an ally of Cæsar, to whom he had presented the lady. Cassivelaunus led an army of sixty-one thousand men in pursuit, and after slaying six thousand of Cæsar's followers recaptured his beloved."

764. flaws: sudden gusts of wind which lay or lodge grain. The word *corn* of course is used for any kind of grain.

771. Never man rejoiced. Is not this an evidence of selfishness and supreme disregard for Enid's feelings?

818. gaudy-day: some merry, festal day.

829. white sails flying on the yellow sea. Swinburne says: "On the first bright day I ever spent on the eastern coast of England I saw the truth of this touch. . . . There on the dull, yellow, formless floor of dense, discolored sea, so thick with clotted sand that the water looked massive and solid as the shore, the white sails flashed whiter against it and along it as they fled, and I knew once more the truth of what I had never doubted—that the eye and hand of Tennyson may always be trusted at once and alike to see and to express the truth."

GERAINT AND ENID

This Idyll takes up the narrative, where it was broken off, at line 144, in the preceding Idyll, and goes straight forward to the end, following the original story in the Mabinogion, but with a number of variations, which generally add to the dramatic interest. The student should not fail to read the original and compare Tennyson's work with it.

1. O purblind, etc. Why does the poet begin with this invocation? In what special way is it appropriate at this point in the action of the poem? **Purblind** means here dim-sighted.

3. forge. Observe the peculiar force of this word in this connection.

7. where we see, etc. Cf. *I. Corinthians* xiii. 12.

20. Effeminate, etc. Cf. "The Marriage of Geraint," line 107.

30. marches: March means a bound or border, hence a frontier. It was most commonly applied to the border lands between England and Scotland, and between England and Wales.

49. great plover. The whistle of this bird is so like that of a man that it often deceives wanderers on the heaths. Dyer in his *English Folk-lore* says that there is a curious notion about some species of plovers that their bodies are

inhabited by the souls of those Jews who took part in the crucifixion of Christ.

52. If there be such in me, etc. Referring to "that unnoticed failing" in line 47.

76. Did I wish, etc. In the Mabinogion Geraint's reply is, "Thou hadst only to hold thy peace as I bade thee. I wish but for silence not for warning." In the first edition the line read, "Did I wish your silence or your warning?" In later editions, the line was changed to read as at present. Can you see a reason for the change?

94. three dead wolves. Cf. "The Coming of Arthur," lines 26–33.

119. shallow snade: edge of the wood. Notice the contrast with "deep" and "gloom" following.

125. set on: attack.

151. not obey. The position of the negative is unusual, though it is sometimes so placed in Shakespeare.

155. Short fits. Observe how the structure of this sentence suggests the agonized breathlessness of the action.

164. windy walls. Observe the similar use of this expression in "The Palace of Art," line 72. The student should not fail to observe how carefully Tennyson chooses his adjectives and how often he makes an alliterative phrase with them.

171. That listens. Observe the special beauty and fitness of this simile. It was suggested to the poet by a scene near Festiniog, in Wales.

198. meadow gemlike, etc.: A grassy plain set in the brown wilderness like a gem.

218. guerdon: reward or recompense.

245. errant: wandering.

247. false doom. Cf. "The Marriage of Geraint," lines 813–16.

250. humorous ruth: pity mixed with amusement.

258. listless annulet: rings of grasses or rushes made without purpose.

267. supporters of a shield. That is, in a coat of arms. *Supporters* is a term used in heraldry.

277. Limours. Cf. "The Marriage of Geraint," line 440. In the Mabinogion this earl was a stranger to Enid. Tennyson has intensified the revolting features of this episode in order to emphasize the jealousy of Geraint and to make the

contrast still greater between his unreasoning anger and the gentle patience of Enid.

291. **took the word,** etc. In telling his licentious tales, he used the words of double meaning.

300. **My free leave.** This permission granted to Limours and the insult contained in the sentence has been called the crowning injury which Geraint heaped upon Enid. It also illustrates the depths of infamous misjudgment into which jealousy, the meanest of all evil passions, will lead a man. To what extent is the sin of Guinevere responsible for the sufferings of Enid?

306. **pilot star:** the North star, by which pilots were wont to guide their ships over the ocean.

324. **lovers' quarrels.** Milton says, "Lovers' quarrels oft in pleasing concord end."

329. **loves you no more.** Is not this statement of Limours true?

341. **there is the keep.** Limours means to say that he does not contemplate the death of Geraint, but that he will imprison him in the *keep* or dungeon of a castle.

410. **Suddenly honest.** A touch of humor which is not often found in the *Idylls.*

431. **As careful robins,** etc. Cf. "The Marriage of Geraint," lines 773–74. "This line was made one day while my father was digging, as was his wont, in the kitchen garden at Farringford, when he was much amused by the many watchful robins around him."—Tennyson's *Works,* edited by Hallam, Lord Tennyson, Vol. III, p. 473.

449. **bicker.** Here means to sparkle or to move quickly. Cf. "The Brook":

> "I come from haunts of coot and hern,
> I make a sudden sally.
> And sparkle out among the fern,
> To bicker down a valley."

470. **crystal dykes:** ditches filled with clear water.

475. **cressy islets:** masses of cress matted together in the water.

477. **boon:** used here in the sense of convivial. It is from the French word *bon,* meaning good.

485. Not a hoof left. When a knight conquered another in battle, the horse and armor of the defeated knight became the property of the victor, by the laws of chivalry. In the previous combats Geraint has captured the horses of his enemies; this time they have all run away.

490. shall we fast or dine? Shall we go hungry or shall we take his armor and pay for our dinner with it?

525. perilous: because he might risk his own life by showing pity for a victim of the fierce Earl Doorm.

565. litter-bier. A litter is a portable bed or couch. Bier comes from a word meaning to bear. In the Mabinogion the incident is related, ". . . and to see if he yet would live, he had him carried with him in the hollow of his shield and upon a bier . . . and when they arrived there, Geraint was placed upon a litter couch in front of the table that was in the hall." Cf. the familiar saying of the Spartan mother.

572. settle: a long wooden bench with a high back.

629–630. The brawny spearman, etc. An amazingly realistic touch.

631. the old serpent. *Revelation* xii. 9.

632. as the worm, etc. Tennyson says, "I used to watch worms drawing in withered leaves on the lawn at Farringford."

679. weed: from the Anglo-Saxon, meaning a garment. Cf. *widows' weeds.*

687. shoaling sea, etc. Whoever has noticed the tints of the water as it shoals towards the beach from the deep sea will appreciate the beauty of the simile, and also the genius of the poet in choosing rare and beautiful figures of comparison.

727. shore: an obsolete past participle of shear.

762. And never yet. Stopford Brooke says of the passage which follows, ". . . we do not wonder that Tennyson was so moved with his own creation as to write about her (Enid) some of the loveliest lines he ever wrote about womanhood."

763. four rivers. "And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads."—*Genesis* ii. 10.

768. happy mist. "But there went up a mist from the ground, and watered the whole face of the earth."—*Genesis* ii. 6.

791. By overthrowing, etc. Explain the paradox.

820. hollow land: volcanic region.

830. With one main purpose. See line 838 fol.

841. that ever answered Heaven: reflected back the blue of heaven.

892. delegated hands: He had trusted to others to report the condition of the country, and to exercise his authority, without giving it his personal attention.

902. vicious quitch: Quitch-grass is a weed-grass somewhat resembling wheat and difficult to eradicate. In the United States it is called witch-grass.

928. Bala lake: the largest lake in Wales and so situated that the southwest wind blows along its whole length and swells the waters of the Dee, which flows from it. Professor Masson says, "The holy Dee is sacred with Druidic and Arthurian legends."

935. the White Horse. Littledale says: "There is a huge figure of a horse, 374 feet long, cut in the turf on a chalky hillside near Wantage in Berkshire. It was made to commemorate Alfred's victory over the Danes in the reign of Ethelred. The white horse was an emblem of Hengist. It represented the horse of Odin, the war-god of northern mythology." Thomas Hughes has written a book on *The Scouring of the White Horse.*

957. the spiteful whisper. See "The Marriage of Geraint," lines 56–60.

969. fighting for the blameless king. Lady Charlotte Guest in a note says:

"The name of Geraint, the son of Erbin, is familiar to all lovers of ancient Welsh literature, through the beautiful elegy composed on him by his fellow-warrior, the venerable bard Llywarch Hen. He was a prince of Devon, and fell fighting valiantly against the Saxons, under Arthur's banner, in the battle of Llongborth."

"Before Geraint, the terror of the foe,
I saw steeds fatigued with the toil of battle,
And after the shout was given, how dreadful was the onset.

Before Geraint, the scourge of the enemy,
I saw steeds white with foam,
And after the shout of battle a fearful torrent.

At Llongborth I saw the raging of slaughter,
And an excessive carnage
And warriors blood-stained from the assault of Geraint.

At Llongborth was Geraint slain,
A valiant warrior from the woodlands of Devon,
Slaughtering his foes as he fell."

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

The two Idylls, "Balin and Balan" and "Merlin and Vivien," which intervene between the Geraint Idylls and this, are omitted here. In them the progress of evil at the court is clearly shown. The moral deterioration of the Round Table has been very rapid since the time of Geraint. Scandal is no longer whispered, but is the current gossip of all. Evil, in the person of Vivien, has taken up her permanent abode at the court, and Arthur's knights no longer pursue with single hearts and fixed purpose the high ideals of their king.

For the first time Lancelot is brought into the foreground. Hitherto he has dominated the poem like some gigantic mountain peak, which, though hidden by enveloping clouds, still thrills the air and earth with a sense of its hidden majesty. He was the friend chosen by the king to escort Guinevere to the court for her high marriage. Thinking he was the king, when first she saw him, she fell in love with him. He it was that she wedded in her heart when her outward troth was plighted before the altar to the immaculate king. Again we catch a glimpse of him, wholly noble and human, in "Gareth and Lynette," and once more in the garden scene in "Balin and Balan." Now we see him in all his strength and all his weakness. Plainly the poet pictures his splendid qualities of mind and heart, sullied, as they are, by the dark stains of his unholy passion.

Guinevere appears as the selfish, passionate shadow of her former self. How great the change since first she rode forth amid the blossoms of that May so many years ago to take her place as the consort of the blameless king! With his ideals she has no sympathy, for his person no affection, and for his daily life no vestige of interest. Her whole being is swallowed up by her love for Lancelot, and she takes no pains to conceal it from any one except the king. Clearly she appears as the cause of the moral ruin of the noblest knight

of them all; and the infection of her wilful sin is spreading throughout the entire court, and effectually thwarting the most exalted purpose of the Round Table, that for which it was founded, the quest of the Holy Grail. For it was only as these knights grew in spiritual grace and purity of thought and life that they could become fitted for the exalted mission. The vows which made each one the champion of the right against the wrong, the weak against the strong, were only a preparation for the consummate deed which was to crown the whole Round Table with the glory of transcendent achievement.

As sin first came into the world through the medium of the most beautiful and closed the gates of Paradise, so now the choicest flower in this royal garden became the source and prime cause of its devastation.

Contrasted strongly with Guinevere is Elaine, the high type of womanly purity and perfectness. Littledale says: "Tennyson's power of drawing the characters of simple and lovable women is here seen to perfection. It is easy enough to represent a woman in whom the elements of good and evil are mingled, or in whom the latter predominate,—such a character is in no danger of being too neutral-tinted or monotonous; but it is a far harder task to depict women like Enid and Elaine, fair and lovable beings, with all the charm of purity and goodness, but moving steadfastly within the orbit of homely simple duties, and lacking the effect of deviation, the contrast of light and shade, that we see in the lives of less clear-natured women. In delineating these gracious creatures Tennyson stands unrivalled; and in his rare sympathy with such types of womanly purity we may perceive the almost feminine delicacy of his mind."

The outline of the story of Elaine, the poet has taken from the *Morte Darthur*, XVIII, chapters viii to xxi.

1. **Elaine the fair.** Observe that the poet plunges into the middle of the story as he does in "The Marriage of Geraint."

2. **the lily maid of Astolat.** Malory calls her Elaine le Blank, that is, *blanche*, meaning white. Astolat is near Guilford in Surrey.

4. **the sacred shield of Lancelot:** sacred, because she held him the greatest and purest of all knights, and he had

left his shield blazoned with the records of his deeds in her care.

7. soilure: from an old French word meaning filth. It was customary for knights to keep their shields in silken cases when not in use. These cases were often fabricated and ornately decorated by their lady-loves.

10. tinct: *Tint* is the modern spelling. **Wit** means fancy.

22. Caerlyle: a border town in northern England on the Eden river. *Caer,* appearing in this and the following name, means a wall or fortification, hence these places were undoubtedly fortified towns or strongholds.

35. Lyonesse: a mythical region near Cornwall, which appears only in the Arthurian romances. It is said to be now submerged more than forty fathoms deep under the water between the Land's End and the Scilly Islands. It calls to mind the fabled Atlantis.

36. tarn: a small mountain lake without visible outlet.

53. shingly scaur: a bare and broken place on the side of the hill, with small stones scattered over it.

59. Divinely: providentially.

67. still: continually.

75. this world's hugest: London.

94. lets. From a different root from the word which means *to permit.* It is now obsolete, but had the meaning of *hinder, prevent.*

95. Glanced first, etc. This episode marks the first entrance of suspicion into the heart of the king, but his nature is so frank and his own character so stainless that he dismisses it. For the first time, Lancelot has stained his life with a lie, one of the basest sins of which a knight could be guilty. The advancing and corrupting power of the great sin is shown.

97. To blame, etc. Cf. Malory, XVIII, viii, "And so by the way the king lodged in a town called Astolat, that is now in English called Guilford, and there the king lay in the castle. So when the king was departed, the queen called Sir Lancelot unto her, and said, Sir Lancelot, ye are greatly to blame, thus to hold you behind my lord: what trow ye, what will your enemies and mine say and deem? not else but see how Sir Lancelot holdeth him ever behind the king, and so doth the queen, for that they would be together: and

thus will they say, said the queen to Sir Lancelot, have ye no doubt thereof."

102. **vext at having lied in vain.** A false shame that is excited, not by the sin, but by the fact that the sin was in vain.

110. **allowed:** accepted and approved.

121. **faultless.** Notice the use of the word by each one of the two. Is there any difference in the use? Guinevere shows her own unworthiness when she utters her scornful words about the king.

130. **vows impossible.** Cf. "Gareth and Lynette," line 266.

138. **vermin voices.** The alliteration serves to bring out more strongly the bitterness of these words.

144. **honors,** etc. Cf. "The Coming of Arthur," line 132.

145. **A moral child,** etc. Arthur's guileless simplicity and utter truthfulness could not be appreciated by the deceitful mind of the queen, and caused her to despise him. To what extent is her word true where she says, "Else he had not lost me!"

157. **They prove to him his work:** They show that his ideals are beginning to mould and shape their lives.

176. **Elaine.** The student should read Malory, XVIII, ix, and then compare Tennyson's treatment of this character to see how much more beautiful and full of sweet humanity is the conception of the poet than that of the old romancer.

181. **Livest between the lips.** This is a literal translation of a line from the *Eneid*, 201.

201. **but Lavaine,** etc. This is one of the lighter touches which relieve the gloom of this tragic and pathetic Idyll.

246. **Had marred his face.** This description of Lancelot is noteworthy. The struggle of a great and noble nature against a sin that was utterly abhorrent and yet too sweet to be conquered was so elemental as to mark his features and at times drive him into the solitudes of the wilderness, like the man with the unclean spirit, in *Luke* vii. 29. Perhaps Tennyson had in mind Sir Ector's eulogy on Lancelot after his death,—Malory, XXI, xiii: "Ah, Lancelot, he said, thou were head of all Christian knights and now I dare say, said Sir Ector, thou Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knight's hand; and thou were the courtliest knight that ever bare shield; and thou were

truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrode a horse; and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest man that strake with sword; and thou were the goodliest person ever came among press of knights; and thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in rest."

269. glanced at Guinevere. When the name of Guinevere was mentioned in the conversation, Lancelot at once changed the subject.

279. Badon hill. The last of the twelve battles which Arthur was said to have fought against the heathen. Nennius, in his *Chronicles*, says, Arthur killed nine hundred and sixty in this battle with his own hand alone, no one but the Lord affording him assistance.

280. rapt: from a Latin word meaning carried away.

287. the violent Glem. These are the battles as listed by Nennius: "The first battle in which he was engaged, was at the mouth of the river Glem. The second, third, fourth, and fifth, were on another river, by the Britons called Duglas, in the region Linius. The sixth on the river Bassus. The seventh in the wood Celidon, which the Britons called Cat Coit Celidon. The eighth was near Gernion Castle, where Arthur bore the image of the Virgin Mary, Mother of God, on his shoulders, and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy Mary, put the Saxons to flight, and pursued them the whole day with great slaughter. The ninth was at the city of Legion, which is called Caer Leon. The tenth was on the banks of the river Trat Treuroit. The eleventh was on the mountain Breguoin, which we call Cat Bregion. The twelfth was a most severe contest, when Arthur penetrated to the hill of Badon."

314. the fire of God. Cf. "The Coming of Arthur," line 127.

338. rathe: an obsolete word of which *rather* is the comparative. It means *early*.

354. rapt. She stood exalted in ecstasy as she gazed upon his face.

401. A hermit. This fine passage describing the hermit's

cave is all the poet's own; Malory has no reference to the cave.

409. noise of falling showers. Whoever has heard the rustling of the leaves of these trees at night will realize the force of the simile.

422. Pendragon means supreme head. The term was applied only to Uther and Arthur.

429. Lay like a rainbow, etc. Because of the brilliant colors worn by the ladies seated there.

440. with all ease: with perfect harmony.

442. nameless king. See lines 45–46.

446. crescent: increasing, growing.

480. as a wild wave. In a letter from Tennyson to his wife occurs this passage: "Towards morning storm arose, and our topmast was broken off. I stood next morning a long time by the cabin door and watched the green sea looking like a mountainous country, far-off waves with foam at the top looking like snowy mountains bounding the scene; one great wave, green-shining, past with all its crests smoking high up beside the vessel. As I stood there came a sudden hurricane and roared drearily in the funnel for twenty seconds and past away." Quoted in Tennyson's *Works,* Vol. III, p. 484.

535. Gawain was the brother of Gareth and was one of the most prominent knights at Court, but not altogether for his good qualities. In Tennyson he is fickle, light-minded, unstable and altogether a mischief-maker and scandal-monger. It was the irony of fate that he should have been chosen for this quest as he was the enemy of Lancelot and the Queen.

545. Bring us where he is. Bring us news of his whereabouts.

556. Sir Modred was the traitor of the Round Table, always plotting the overthrow of Arthur and the downfall of his great ideals. Cf. "Gareth and Lynette," lines 31, 32; 409.

583. Our true Arthur. Notice how ingeniously she mixes up her own words with those of Lancelot.

592. So fine a fear. The king is gently sarcastic in this saying.

608. Traitor. What was the cause of this paroxysm of anger on the part of the queen?

635. Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it. Contrast Gawain's courtesy at Astolat with that of Lancelot.

707. our courtesy. Every knight had taken the most solemn oath to do the king's will. Gawain had been sent to perform a mission, and now lightly boasts that his false courtesy absolves him from his oath to do the king's will.

717. shook his hair. Cf. "The Coming of Arthur," line 320.

728. Marred her friend's aim. Spoiled the effect of her friend's malice.

807. battle-writhen: twisted or distorted by stress of battle.

871. His honor rooted in dishonor, etc. A magnificent example of Tennyson's epigrammatic power.

883. What the rough sickness meant. She could understand his impatience born of suffering, but his moodiness she could not fathom and grieved over it.

898. burthen: the refrain of a song.

905. victim's flowers. It was the custom when human sacrifices were offered, in heathen religions, to wreathe the victim with flowers.

923. that I live to hear is yours: It is due to you that I am alive today to hear you.

924. Then suddenly. Stopford Brooke says of this passage: "She rises to the very verge of innocent maidenliness in passionate love, but she does not go over the verge. And to be on the verge and not pass beyond it is the very peak of innocent girlhood when seized by overmastering love. It was as difficult to represent Elaine as to represent Juliet; and Tennyson has succeeded well where Shakespeare succeeded beautifully. It is great praise, but it is well deserved." This comparison should be discussed by the class.

939. quit: requite, repay.

953. half my realm beyond the seas. Malory, XX, xvii, says, "But to say the sooth Sir Lancelot and his nephews were lords of all France and of the lands that longed unto France, he and his kindred rejoiced in all through Sir Lancelot's noble prowess."

969. That were against me. Sir Lancelot was known as the perfect example of knightly courtesy.

977. tact: an intuitive sense.

997. she made a little song. Tennyson touched the high-water mark of his poetic genius in his impassioned lyrics. For perfection of form and musical cadence there are few if

any lyrics which surpass those in *The Princess*, with which every student of Tennyson ought to be familiar. This song is one of simple beauty and deep pathos, the death song of a sweet-souled and pure-minded maiden, innocent of the evils of society, yet the victim directly of the sin which is surely corrupting the court of Arthur and destroying his work.

1015. **the Phantom of the house:** referring to the banshee, which was supposed to attend every great family in Ireland. It was a species of fairy, who, in the shape of a hideous little old woman, has been known to appear, and heard to sing in a mournful, supernatural voice under the windows of great houses to warn the family that some of them were soon to die.

1092. **ghostly man:** one who has to do with the soul or spirit, hence a priest.

1134. **to that stream:** the Thames, which flows by London where Arthur is now holding court (line 76). If Astolat was near Guilford, it was only about twenty-five miles from London, and not far from the river which is swept by the ocean tides some miles above London.

1140. **And on the black decks:** In this connection "The Lady of Shalott" should be read.

1170. **oriel:** a deeply recessed window. It comes from a Latin word which means gilded or richly decorated.

1178. **tawnier:** The neck of the cygnet is of a yellowish tinge, while the neck of the swan is pure white.

1198. **Lancelot of the Lake.** He was so called because in the old romances he was brought up in the castle of the Lady of the Lake.

1209. **For her.** Compare the jealousy of Guinevere with the trustfulness of Elaine in the passage beginning with line 1079.

1217. **her pearls.** See line 601.

1233. **slowly past the barge.** Notice the dramatic power of this passage. While the queen is working herself up to the climax of her bitter jealousy, the barge with the silent form of her supposed rival is slowly floating before the window from which she casts the diamonds.

1243. **the face.** Perhaps reference is made to the Great Stone Face of Hawthorne.

1256–1257. **Sir Percivale . . . Sir Galahad.** The two

purest and holiest knights of the Round Table, and therefore the ones most fit to bear the body of the lily maid.

1264. Most noble lord. In Malory, XVIII, xx, we read: "And this was the intent of the letter: Most noble knight, Sir Lancelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love; I was your lover that men called the fair maiden at Astolat; therefore unto all ladies I make my moan; yet pray for my soul, and bury me at the least and offer ye my mass-penny. This is my last request. And a clean maiden I died. I take God to witness. Pray for my soul, Sir Lancelot, as thou art peerless.—This was all the substance in the letter."

1299. Sea was her wrath: Her wrath was like the sea, over which the storm has passed, but which has not yet returned to peace and tranquillity.

1316. to thy worship: to thy honor.

1319. that shrine: Westminster Abbey, the most famous church in England, was built by Edward the Confessor on the site of an earlier church.

1346. affiance: trust, confidence.

1376. And Lancelot answered nothing. Why?

1408. Alas for Arthur's greatest knight. The inherent nobility of Lancelot's character is shown in passages such as this. Many times he is represented as struggling against the evil which had overcome him, sometimes with such determination that he absented himself from the haunts of men and wandered in the wilderness as one demented. Such an episode in his life is detailed in "The Holy Grail."

1418. Not knowing he should die a holy man. See Malory, XXI, ix, x.

THE HOLY GRAIL

This Idyll was first published in 1869 and is based on Malory XIII–XVII, though the poet's invention and imagination have so expanded and enriched the original narrative that his indebtedness to the legends of the past seems slight. He says, himself: "The Holy Grail is one of the most imaginative of my poems. I have expressed there my strong feeling as to the Reality of the Unseen. The end where the king speaks

of his work and of his visions is intended to be the summing up of all in the highest note by the highest of men."

The quest of the Holy Grail was to have been the crowning achievement of the Round Table, and toward it, as a final goal, Arthur had consciously directed all his own activities and those of his court. In order to attain this quest it was necessary that his knights should rise from the lower to the higher levels of life, that they should press persistently upward until they had reached that state of moral and social perfection which was the highest ideal of knighthood. In the realization of this purpose, he had been increasingly thwarted by the growing power of evil, finding its birth first in the heart of the queen and spreading like an infectious disease throughout the court and the remoter circles beyond. Thus the offence of one, and that the most beloved, was destined to bring to nought all his efforts to achieve the triumph of his great ideals as well as to bring confusion and final destruction to the Round Table.

When each knight had perfected his character through self-denial and the persistent pursuit of righteousness, his life was to be crowned by the final quest, but it was necessary that all, and not one or two alone, should pass successfully through the period of preparation, and thus stand together in one great social and moral order which should be powerful to win the world to the higher ideals. Now the time is not ripe, for few have attained the necessary high plane of living, and failure in this means failure in all; for if the supreme task is impossible, despair must follow the failure of the quest and utter moral collapse will be the result.

"This Idyll marks the turn of the tide in Arthur's fortunes; the succeeding poems display the ebbing of his influence and authority until that last scene when all seems lost, and he departs for a time from a world unripe for regeneration."

2. Sir Percivale: the hero of many mediæval legends which center around the search for the Grail. These legends have appeared in the literature of nearly all European nations, but probably originated among the Welsh in the romance of Peredur, a name which means "searcher for the basin." The character is the same as that which forms the hero of Wagner's great opera, Parsifal.

4. silent life of prayer: In the days of chivalry when a

knight had finished his career of warfare and adventure, he often crowned his earthly life by retiring to a monastery and spending his last days in prayer and meditation.

13. **world-old yew tree.** The yew tree is an evergreen with dark, thick foliage. It is slow-growing and very long-lived.

15. **smoke:** The pollen of the yew was blown from the trees by the wind in clouds so thick that they looked like smoke.

21. **the pale.** The usual term for the limits of the monastery grounds.

30. **"Nay," said the knight.** From this point on, the Idyll takes the form of a dialogue, with the monk as questioner and Percival the narrator of the story. This Idyll touches upon the supernatural much more strongly than any other and involves a wider range of the imagination. It is much more effective to call upon one who has passed through all the scenes to narrate his experiences than for the poet to depict them in his own person.

31. **the Holy Grail.** There is a vast body of romances, some pagan and many Christian, relating to the Holy Grail. It was supposed to be the cup which Christ had used at the Last Supper and in which Joseph of Arimathea had collected His blood after the crucifixion. It remained in the possession of Joseph until his death, which was supposed to have occurred in Britain. The cup was gifted with miraculous powers, such as providing food for the hungry and saving lives in the presence of danger. Joseph was said to have built a sanctuary for the Grail at Glastonbury, where it remained for many years, but finally departed because of the corruption of the times.

38. **We are green:** that is, we are gifted with the true life from the heavenly standpoint, though from earthly standards we may appear dead and moldering.

41. **refectory:** a hall or apartment in a monastery or convent where meals were eaten.

48. **Aromat:** used for Arimathea.

49. **the day of darkness.** The temple was on Mount Moriah and the wandering of the dead after the crucifixion is told in *Matthew* xxvii, 50-53.

52. **Glastonbury, where,** etc. The winter thorn is a

variety of thorn which puts forth leaves and blossoms at Christmas time. It is said to have originated at Glastonbury Abbey, where the original thorn had sprung from the staff of Joseph, which had supported his steps during his wanderings from the Holy Land to Britain.

61. **Arviragus:** one of the sons of Cymbeline, who figured in Shakespeare's play of that name. He was supposed to have reigned as king of Britain from 44 to 72 A.D.

63. **wattles:** reeds woven or plaited together.

70. **Than sister.** Percivale's sister is the third of Tennyson's pure and meek women. The mystic, shadowy character of this sweet, unearthly maid accords well with that of her spiritual mate, Sir Galahad.

107. **Sweet brother,** etc. Notice the peculiar musical rhythm, which pulsates with deep and tender emotion, and which is in perfect harmony with the strange, weird incident, which it depicts.

118. **Rose-red,** etc. It was vibrating with a life which was at once intense and beneficent. Compare its appearance to Galahad, line 473, and to Lancelot, line 839.

135. **Galahad** is the personification of that perfect purity which has never yielded to temptation. He has preserved his innocence because he has had his mind so intent on the quest of the Grail that he has been impervious to human ambition as well as to human sympathy. While his character is saintly, it has not been perfected through struggle and conflict, but represents the triumph of asceticism which achieves its victories through the withdrawal from the world and its temptations, for the purpose of gaining its own salvation, rather than through the devoting of one's powers to the service of humanity. The weakness of the situation appears in the fact that it is the ascetic who achieves the quest and not the one who gives his life to the service of his people. Arthur never saw the Grail, though his life was so shaped as to be productive of the highest good to his people.

167. **a vacant chair.** The Siege Perilous. *Siege* means a chair, and when Merlin made it he said, "There shall no man sit in it but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it, he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit in it shall have no fellow." By one legend Merlin sat in it himself and dis-

appeared forever. In Tennyson's Idyll, "Merlin and Vivien," Merlin is overcome by the magic of Vivien.

213. It should be observed that the king, with those knights who were doing their appointed work, did not see the vision.

232. **And four great zones,** etc. The various stages through which the knights of the Round Table must pass before the quest can be achieved. Few have entered the fourth zone.

253. **Where Arthur finds,** etc. Cf. "The Passing of Arthur," lines 196–201.

264. **And many of those.** Littledale says: "The contrast between Arthur's band of grimy warriors just back from burning the nest of robbers, and the rapt faces of the vision-struck knights, who have vowed the vow, is strikingly told. By his question, 'Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?' Arthur implies that Percivale does not realize the magnitude of the task that he has taken upon himself. None of them have seen it, and he asked what they went out into the wilderness to see (*Matthew* xi. 7); in other words, did they know the meaning of what they had seen? They had all heard a voice amid the crashing thunders, but Galahad alone had 'ears to hear' it summon him to follow."

273. **Darkened,** because he foresaw from this the downfall of the Round Table.

300. **Taliessin** was one of the greatest of British bards, who flourished in the seventh century. Arthur proceeds to show by a series of metaphors that they are going on a quest beyond their powers. Galahad being pure enough for such a quest, they all deem themselves Galahads in purity; Taliessin being the greatest bard, they were all going to be Taliessins; Lancelot being first in prowess, they would all take on themselves the toils of Lancelot. They were foolish sheep who would follow the bell-wether anywhere.

In reality they were not Galahads or Percivales, great spiritual champions, but only valiant knights who had fought the heathen and not in vain. For such tasks they were fitted, but not yet for the higher quest. Still man's word was sacred, and since they had made the vow they must go. The pity was that while they follow "wandering fires," many opportunities for doing good would arise and be neglected, there being no knights left for such work.

350. wyvern, etc.: These were heraldic devices. The *wyvern* was a dragon-like creature.

358. Gate of the Three Queens. Cf. "Gareth and Lynette," line 255.

361. And I was lifted up in heart, etc. In recounting his adventures, Percivale speaks first of his overweening pride in his own great deeds, then the sad conviction of his own unworthiness for the great quest, then the allegorical tales of temptation showing that all the things which we are wont to hold most dear are after all but illusions. His increasing thirst cannot be quenched by pleasures of the senses, by love —even that highest love of man for woman and for children, by fame and splendor, or by the highest human pride and aspirations. All fall into dust at his touch. It is only when he approaches the humble hermit-monk that he finds out the secret of his failure.

449. she said. That is, Humility.

462. sacring of the mass: the consecration of the bread and wine.

466. the fiery face. "And then he took a cake of the Sacrament, which was made in the likeness of bread; and at the lifting up there came a figure in the likeness of a child, and the visage was as bright and red as any fire, and smote himself into that bread, so that they all saw that the bread was formed of fleshy man."—Malory, XVII, xx.

526. the spiritual city: the New Jerusalem. Cf. *Revelation* xxi. 10 fol.

545. breviary: a condensed book of prayers and services used in the Catholic Church.

547. thorpe: little village.

558. market-cross: a cross stood in the market-place of nearly every European town in the Middle Ages.

600. the heads: the leading men.

612. when yule is cold: when Christmas is past.

633. The pelican, etc. It is an old legend that the pelican feeds its young with drops of blood from its own breast. Hence it has been regarded as symbolical of Christ shedding his blood for mankind. It was often adopted as a heraldic crest.

639. maddening what he rode: goading his horse to a high pitch of excitement.

643. a lion in the way. His sinful love which made his quest of the Holy Grail a hopeless one.

646. his former madness. Malory tells of the madness of Lancelot, caused by Guinevere's anger at him, when she believed him to be in love with Elaine. After two years he was healed by the Holy Grail.

661. Paynim. Littledale says: "Sir Bors meets some remnants of the old fire-worshippers, lurking in the mountain wilds amid their cromlechs (stone circles) and dolmens (stone chambers and flat stones on pillars). Their Druid priests, wise in astrology, scoff at this quest in which Sir Bors is engaging. It is a false fire, a will-o'-the wisp, they tell him; there is no true fire to worship save the sun."

675. hollow-ringing heavens. It was an old belief that the heavenly bodies, as they swept through the vast reaches of space, gave utterance to a majestic harmony which was called "the music of the spheres."

681. The seven clear stars: the Great Bear.

714. Heaps of ruin. Caused by the gale spoken of in line 726. This scene of destruction is symbolical of the shattering of the Round Table and prepares the way for the final scenes. **Unicorns,** a fabulous beast resembling the horse, but with a single horn projecting from the middle of the forehead. **Basilisks,** a monster of the dragon order, having but two legs, with a dragon's head at the end of the tail. **Cockatrices,** an imaginary creature, half fowl and half reptile. **Talbots,** a sort of hunting dog, with a large nose and large, round, thick ears.

737. Gawain, etc. In Malory, the account of Gawain's adventures is very different. Tennyson gives him a tale which is in keeping with the lack of earnestness and reverence with which the poet has endowed him.

759. like him of Cana. Cf. *John* ii. 1-10.

799. blackening, etc.: showing black against the whiteness of the surf.

810. Carbonek is mentioned several times in Malory and was said to have been for some time the abode of the Holy Grail.

844. All palled in crimson samite. Littledale says: "The Grail is clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud when Galahad sees it, but is all palled in crimson samite before

the eyes of Lancelot; the sinless and sinful visions differ, but that Lancelot sees it, even shrouded in red, may be a sign that he shall die a holy man; that though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool."

862. **deafer than,** etc. It is said that albino cats are blue-eyed and deaf.

901. **Not easily,** etc. These noble sentiments were not in accord with the king-craft of the Middle Ages, however they may be now. Arthur's philosophy of life is embodied in this closing passage. It is clear that he does not approve of Galahad or Percivale as having reached the highest standard of manhood or usefulness.

THE LAST TOURNAMENT

This Idyll was first published in 1871. The bare outline of the story is taken from Malory. The half-humorous, half-pathetic, and wholly faithful fool, Dagonet, is Tennyson's creation.

The season of the year is the late autumn with its chill rains, its falling leaves, and its furious storms, and so the action of the play is passing on from the splendor of its high noon to the darkness and gloom of its swiftly approaching night. The shadows have already begun to fall in the passing away of purity, honor, good faith and loyalty. In the first part, Arthur is the central figure, and here is sustained power, wonderfully graphic word-painting, and the unfathomable pathos of a noble life descending into the grave of its hopes.

6. **carcanet:** a circlet of gold and jewels intended to be worn in the hair.

8. **Tristram** is the hero of a group of romantic legends almost as extended and varied as those of Lancelot or Gawain. Littledale gives the following abstract of the Tristram story, which is necessary to a full comprehension of the Idyll.

"Tristram, having been wounded by an Irish spear, can only be healed by an Irish hand, so he goes to Ireland and is treated by Isolt, daughter of the Irish king. On his return, he gives a glowing description of her to his uncle Mark, who sends him back as his envoy to ask for her hand. On the

voyage from Ireland, they innocently drink the potent philtre, and their fatal love for each other begins. Long after, when the effects of the philtre have been exhausted, Tristram is hurt by a poisoned arrow, and goes to Brittany to be cured by King Hoel's daughter, Isolt of the white hands, whom he loves and marries. Lancelot reproaches him for his inconstancy to La Beale Isoud, and the lady herself writes sadly to him. Tristram's youthful affection revives, and he resolves to go back to Cornwall to see his old love. There is a quarrel, and Tristram reproaches Isolt for her unfaithfulness to him. He goes mad and throws Dagonet into a well. After many adventures Arthur knights him, and he runs away with Isolt, but is wounded in a tournament. Mark undertakes to nurse him, which he does by putting him into a dungeon. Tristram and Isolt again escape and he goes out riding with Isolt, both of them being clad in green attire, when probably the bower mentioned by Tennyson is constructed. He fights with many knights." The similarity between this legend and that of Lancelot is noteworthy.

25. Nestling. Tennyson has apparently based this incident upon an episode in the life of Alfred told in Stanley's "Book of Birds":

"Alfred, king of the West Saxons, went out one day a-hunting, and passing by a certain wood heard, as he supposed, the cry of an infant from the top of a tree, and forthwith diligently inquiring of the huntsmen what that doleful sound could be, commanded one of them to climb the tree, when on top of it was found an eagle's nest, and lo! therein, a sweet-faced infant, wrapped up in a purple mantle, and upon each arm a bracelet of gold, a clear sign that he was born of noble parents. Whereupon the king took charge of him and caused him to be baptized; and because he was found in a nest, he gave him the name of Nestingum, and, in after time, having nobly educated him, he advanced him to the dignity of an earl."

42. Not knowing, etc. Does Guinevere tell the exact truth? Compare the account of this incident in "Lancelot and Elaine," lines 1225–29.

67. pitch-blackened. His maimed arm had been dipped in pitch to stop its bleeding, so that he might reach the king with the defiance of the Red Knight.

90. curiously: carefully. Arthur's high nobility is shown not only by his tender treatment of the maimed churl but also by the absence of all personal animosity against the insolent aggressor. He undertakes the expedition, not to avenge himself, but to make safe this robber-ridden country that the lives of his people might be safe.

98. head like Satan. Cf. *Paradise Lost,* V, 659. The power and prestige of the Round Table are indeed fast waning when it is possible for a rival court to be set up, not only in rebellion against the authority of the king, but to exploit those very evils which Arthur's life had been given to suppress.

114. Is it then so well? At last the king's eyes are beginning to open to the broken faith of his mightiest knight, yet he turns to him, not in anger, but in a grief so deep that it cannot be uttered. This Idyll closes with the complete disillusionment of Arthur, and the flight of Guinevere.

116. A sound, etc. Cf. *Job,* xv. 21.

128. In her high bower the Queen, etc. Arthur goes away leaving in Lancelot a touch of remorse, and in Guinevere a feeling of vague awe and wonder. There is no tender parting, no waving of a last farewell. Careless of her husband and the issue of his desperate conflict, she stays in her high bower while he goes away, without a backward glance, firm in his purpose and the sincerity of his high resolve, but with a nameless gloom settling over his heart never again to rise.

136. The Tournament, etc. From Arthur's quest we turn aside to the doleful story of the Tournament of the Dead Innocence, rightly named, with its twofold meaning, the outer semblance of purity with the supreme mockery of it. Contrast this tournament with the one in "The Holy Grail" and observe the terrible change, the shameless display, the insincerity, the listlessness of Lancelot, once the mighty champion of every joust, the soul of honor, now sitting abstractedly upon the high throne, while all the laws of chivalry and courtesy are broken and he heeds not. The glimpse of the face of Modred the traitor is an ominous suggestion. The old-time courage is gone, and when Tristram comes in his insolent boldness no one dares contest the prize with him, and he wins a shameful victory.

174. A spear, a harp, a bugle. Typifying his threefold character of warrior, harper, and hunter.

177. Sir Tristram. Sir Tristram does not appear elsewhere in the *Idylls* and has no vital connection with this one, unless it is to hold up the mirror to Lancelot and show to him his own sin in its most revolting form. The story of Tristram and Isolt is a repetition of that of Lancelot and Guinevere, even to Isolt of Brittany, who is a second Elaine.

193. is red. The blood upon Tristram's hands is symbolical of the stain upon his honor, though he has won the title of the Champion of Innocence. He receives the prize with gibes and flaunts his scorn in the faces of the maidens in the gallery, until one murmurs

> "All courtesy is dead,
> The glory of our Round Table is no more."

213. Then fell thick rain. The melancholy gloom, the eclipse of innocence, is brought to our consciousness with wonderful vividness.

226. Variously gay. At the feast in the evening, the white of innocence was laid aside for the colors of warmth and passion, until the queen, half appalled, broke up the sports.

234. Rose-campion. A garden flower covered in the late summer with rosy-crimson blossoms. **The king-cup.** Probably the buttercup.

258. broken music. Littledale says: "Arthur wished his knights to move to music with their order and the King, but the music has become broken music—jangled, out of tune, and harsh. Tristram has played false with his bride in Brittany, and so he has played Arthur's music falsely too. Tristram twangles his harp for Dagonet to dance, but the dwarf stands stock still. He is no jester now, but speaks some certain truths, scarce fit for Tristram to hear. Tristram and the rest have been false to Arthur, says Dagonet; they have played ducks and drakes with their holy vows; things have grown so bad that even he, the King's fool, is indignant."

305. Smuttier. *Smut* is a fungus growth that appears on grain and destroys it.

322. Paynim harper. The reference is, of course, to Orpheus, who had the power of charming all animate and inanimate objects with his lyre. He descended, living, into Hades to bring back his wife, Eurydice.

343. The black king's highway. The king's highway is a common phrase. The highway here referred to is "the broad way that leads to destruction."

357. burning spurge: The spurge of this variety is sometimes called milkweed. It burns with a peculiarly acrid smoke.

371. slot or fewmets: hunting terms meaning footprint or droppings.

392. tonguesters. Probably coined by Tennyson and used only once elsewhere, "Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After," line 130.

419. He dreamed; but Arthur, etc. The journey of Tristram is interrupted by the tale of Arthur's expedition. This passage is Homeric and is one of the strongest in the *Idylls*. It is a Miltonic fight of the Prince of Light against the dark and deadly powers of evil. Mystic, awful, these figures move across the stage in fire and blood, and when, after the troubled night, the calm and peaceful dawn appeared, Arthur had won his last victory. Notice the high tension of the conflict, its breathless eagerness, and, finally, the peace and tranquillity of the last two lines.

421. sallowy. Covered with willows.

423. machicolated: furnished with projecting galleries, with holes in the floor for pouring hot lead and other inflammables upon the heads of enemies below.

432. field noir: in a black field.

438. That sent the face, etc. That roused to hasty flight the myriads of water-fowl that lived in the marsh.

450. scorpion-worm. There was an old legend to the intent that if the scorpion was surrounded by fire he would sting himself to death. The idea of the worm may have been taken from *Isaiah* lxvi. 24: "For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched."

479. Alioth and Alcor: Arabic names for two of the stars in the constellation of the Great Bear.

481. Moab saw. The reference is to *II Kings* iii. 22: "And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood."

485. But in the heart of Arthur, etc. Cf. line 239; also "The Coming of Arthur," line 123.

492. one lone woman. Perhaps typical of Isolt of Brit-

tany, whom he had deserted. Cf. "Geraint and Enid," lines 520–523.

501. **roky**: misty.

503. **Yelp at his heart**: rousing the instinct of the hunter in his breast and making him long to follow the chase.

509. **spiring stone**: the spiral stairway of stone.

530–534. **But eat not thou with Mark**, etc. Cf. "Gareth and Lynette," lines 418–424.

549. **Queen Paramount**: Queen Guinevere.

555. **My dole**: my portion.

572. **Crowned warrant**: that is, the example of the queen.

594. **by whom**: in comparison with whom.

603. **yield herself to God**: enter a convent.

611. **levin-brand**: lightning.

620. **leman**: sweetheart.

627. **malkin**: a swineherd's wench among the beechmast, feeding swine.

658. **Michael.** An archangel mentioned in the Bible, who was regarded as the great leader of the angelic hosts.

692. **The ptarmigan.** Littledale says: "The color of this bird varies, being brownish gray in the summer and white in the winter. The changes of plumage enable it to harmonize with its surroundings at the various seasons. If the ptarmigan's feathers were to turn white before the winter's cold began, it would be seen by the eagle-owls and falcons, and would soon be killed. The metaphor is very ingenious. We are men of the earth, earthy, like the ptarmigan's summer color; if we try prematurely to become whiter than our surroundings, the rest of mankind, our ruin must follow."

695. **the garnet-headed yaffingale**: the green woodpecker.

748. **Mark's way.** Cf. line 530 and line 613.

749. **That night.** The sudden and swift Nemesis is followed by the lines in which the misery of the epic reaches its climax. No longer can the king remain ignorant of the degradation of the court. He returns in the night shadowed "in a death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom." The "Queen's bower was dark." No footstep was heard, and only "a voice sobbing" at his feet, with a message of agony too great to find utterance. The curtain falls.

GUINEVERE

This Idyll was first published in 1859. It is largely original, but is founded on this passage in Malory: "And so she went to Almesbury, and there she let make herself a nun and ware white clothes and black. And great penance she took as ever did sinful lady in this land; and never creature could make her merry, but lived in fastings, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed. Now leave we Queen Guinevere at Almesbury, that was a nun in white clothes and black; and there she was abbess and ruler, as reason would."

"Guinevere" may be called the Idyll of loneliness. The queen has withdrawn from the court and from all her former companionship, including Lancelot, and sought the seclusion of a convent. To her on the eve of his last battle comes Arthur, who at last knows the shameful secret of her life, and how she has brought ruin upon him and his Round Table. Yet he forgives her and passes on to his death in silent, heroic majesty. The motive of the poem from beginning to end is ethical, but it is everywhere vibrant with emotion and the despair of the queen is most powerfully worked out.

2. Almesbury, or Amesbury, is about eight miles north of Salisbury, where the old abbey church is still standing.

4. novice: a maiden who was undergoing the necessary probationary training preparatory to becoming a nun.

7. face-cloth: a linen placed over the face of a dead person.

10. Sir Modred was the oldest son of King Lot, hence the nephew of Arthur. He was of a sullen and traitorous disposition, and had always plotted the overthrow of Arthur, hoping thereby to secure the throne for himself. That he was now tolerated at the court shows that the authority of the king had been seriously undermined.

15. tampered with, etc. Sought to secure the help of the Saxons against Arthur.

16. brood by Hengist left. The descendants of Hengist and his followers, who were reputed to have made the first organized invasion into Britain.

22. **that mocked,** etc.: Imitated the white hawthorn, or may-blossoms.

28. **lissome Vivien:** Vivien was the spirit of malicious mischief. She it was who led Merlin to his fate, as depicted in "Merlin and Vivien." In the earlier days she would never have been permitted to come to the court. But now she not only is tolerated, but becomes one of the chosen companions of the queen. **Lissome** means lithe, active.

32. **colewort:** cabbage.

56. **I shudder,** etc. This is an ancient superstition that is still held in some parts of the world.

64. **Powers that,** etc.: the heavenly powers, conscience.

65. **the death that,** etc.: that punishment which is everlasting.

75. **An awful dream.** Compare this dream with others in the *Idylls*.

120. **sanctuary:** Churches and other sacred places afforded protection from arrest or punishment for any one who had broken the law or committed a crime.

147. **for housel or for shrift:** for the sacrament or confession.

154. **Was waging war on Lancelot:** Arthur supposed that Guinevere had fled with Lancelot, and had crossed the sea to wage war on him.

166. **Late, late, so late!** This song is founded on the parable of the Ten Virgins, in *Matthew* xxv.

193. **Modred** had usurped the throne in Arthur's absence.

212. **Will the child,** etc. For the first time the queen began to see herself as others saw her. Enveloped in haughty pride, she had disdained the opinions of those around, but now the artless prattle of the little maid opened her eyes to her conduct and its results, until she was overwhelmed with a horror of remorse which did not yield to repentance until her interview with the king, when at last she discovered that she loved him alone and not another.

216. **this is all woman's grief:** because the sin, like that in Eden, came through the guilt of a woman.

243. **mermaiden.** From *mere*, meaning *sea*, and *maiden*. In the belief of primitive people, the water was inhabited by numerous creatures, half fish and half human. Especially

noteworthy among these were the Rhine Maidens, so beautifully introduced in the first act of Wagner's *Rhinegold*.

246. little elves. Cf. *The Princess*, IV:

> "O hark! O hear! how thin and clear,
> And thinner, clearer, farther going!
> O sweet and far from cliff and scar
> The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!"

283. that night the bard. Tennyson transforms into poetry the account of the coming of Arthur, which Malory gives as coming from Merlin. The simple story gains much from its poetic setting.

289. Bude and Bos: districts in Cornwall.

294. by miracle. In Malory's account, Arthur proves his right to the throne by drawing a sword from a stone in which it had been set by magic and which no other man could move.

305. This evil work, etc. In Malory, Arthur was warned against the consequences of marrying Guinevere, yet he would not consent to give her up. In the *Idylls* there was no warning except this sudden ending of the seer's vision.

345. doom of fire: everlasting punishment.

370. I repent. What evidence do you find in the following lines that her repentance was not sincere at this time?

378. Cf. "The Coming of Arthur," lines 446–451.

404. while she brooded thus. Observe how opportune and how dramatic was the entrance of the king just at this moment when her mind was swinging back from its new resolve into its accustomed channels.

420. dead before thy shame. This is the first intimation of the death of Leodogran.

421. Well is it, etc. Littledale says: "This is the one unduly hard thing that Arthur says in his otherwise just words to her. Well it may be, now in her dishonor, that she has no children; but how different, with sons and daughters around her, her career might have been, it is not difficult to imagine."

424. The craft of kindred refers to the treachery of Modred, for Arthur is even now on his way to battle with him and his false hordes for the kingdom.

458. knighthood-errant: wandering knights, without organization or common purpose.

499. nor seem to glance at thee: without seeming to cast reproach upon thee. Cf. "Lancelot and Elaine," line 269.

507. so slight elements: so fickle a nature.

509. Littledale thinks the poet should have omitted the passage, lines 509–520. "After all he has said of her sin previously, it is almost an anti-climax to divert our attention from his own particular case to the general case of the man who, either for his own or for his children's sake, lets the false wife abide within his house. He has just emphasized the fact of her being childless, and now he speaks of the general case when there are children to be considered. It may be urged that it is Arthur's nature to be didactic. This is true, but his maxims are out of place here alone with Guinevere: there is no necessity for this further justification of his course of action."

535. The doom of treason. The queen who was unfaithful to her husband was guilty of treason under the old English law. The unfaithful wife was burned at the stake.

537. with one, etc. Meaning his own heart.

677. dole: charity.

679. haler: healthier, from a moral standpoint.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

This complete Idyll was published in 1869. One hundred and sixty-nine lines at the beginning and thirty lines at the end were added to the *Morte Darthur*, published in 1842. The Idyll pictures "the temporary triumph of evil, the confusion of the moral order, closing in the great battle in the West."

"The Passing of Arthur" covers the same ground as the twenty-first book of Malory, but in the latter work little is said about Arthur and much about Lancelot, whose later years in the monastery and death are fully described, while in Tennyson Arthur absorbs the attention from beginning to end. Nowhere do his humanity and high nobility appear in stronger relief than here, where he stands face to face with his doom, and that doom the defeat of all his plans and the overthrow of the great structure which he has spent

his life in erecting. In the midst of it all, that tranquillity which is born of high courage and steadfast purpose does not desert him, and he passes on to the mysterious islands, leaving behind him the record of a noble life nobly lived.

1. **Sir Bedivere:** the first of all his knights to be knighted by Arthur at his crowning, and one of the three sent by Arthur to Leodogran to sue for the hand of Guinevere.

9. **I found Him.** Arthur is perplexed at the failure of all his plans. He has seen God undeniably in the broad heavens and the beautiful earth, but he has not found Him in the ways of men. The mystery is beyond his power to fathom, and in his despair he queries whether God has forsaken him.

25. **and all my realm,** etc. Cf. the passage in "The Coming of Arthur," beginning with line 10.

78. **Hath folded in,** etc. The heavy gloom of mist and cloud that brooded over the world was typical of that which had enveloped his soul after his interview with Guinevere.

91. **Burned at his lowest:** that is, at the winter solstice.

160. **purport:** purposes of my reign.

170. **So all day long.** The earlier *Morte Darthur* begins with this line.

180. **great water.** Some critic has said that Tennyson would have improved the line by substituting "lake" for "water." But the expression, as it stands, shows the fine discrimination with which Tennyson chose his words. As the weary king glanced over the scene, for the first time illuminated by the light of the moon, he was conscious of the presence of water reaching perhaps beyond his vision. He would not observe it as a clearly defined body of water.

182. **unsolders all,** etc. Dissolves the bonds that hold the component parts together, and they all fall apart in utter confusion.

205. **fling him.** Observe the personification, which shows that Arthur thought of his sword almost as a living companion.

238–239. **washing . . . lapping.** These words are said to represent exactly the different sounds made by the water rippling against a movable and an immovable barrier, respectively.

248. **lief:** beloved, pleasing.

278. **clouded with his own conceit:** His sense of right

and wrong was confused by his false conception of the value and beauty of the sword.

290. widowed: deprived of.

293. offices of all: The duties and responsibilities of all the knights now rest upon him, their only survivor.

307. a streamer of the northern morn: the Aurora Borealis. A beautiful and impressive simile.

350. Clothed with his breath: It was so cold that the moisture of his breath congealed in the air around him.

354. Dry clashed. In this passage, Tennyson uses his vowels with remarkable effectiveness. Where the *a* dominates the line we get the sensation of hardness and clashing sounds. The dominating *o*, on the other hand, gives the impression of breadth and smoothness.

383–384. greaves and cuisses dashed with drops of onset: armor for the legs and thighs, stained with drops of blood.

398. a noble chance: that is, a chance to do a noble deed of daring.

401. The holy Elders: the three magi who came from the East to greet the Christ child at Epiphany or Twelfth Night.

403. image of the mighty world. Because here the great world struggle of the right against the wrong was carried on to the bitter end.

408. The old order changeth, etc. Turn back to "The Coming of Arthur," line 508, and note the effect of this repetition of an earlier speech.

410. Lest one good custom, etc. Referring to the institution of chivalry upon whose principles the Round Table was founded.

427. Avilion, or *Avalon*, in Celtic mythology, was the Land of the Blessed or the Isle of Souls. It was a paradise somewhere in the western seas. The only important fruit known in these northern lands seems to have been the apple, and this fruit conveyed the highest notion of enjoyment, hence Paradise was a land where there was an abundance of apples. This island is sometimes located at Glastonbury, the situation of which, on a group of hills rising out of a marsh, which even now in winter is covered with a foot or two of water, well meets the conditions. The tradition also tells that Arthur and Guinevere are both buried at Glastonbury.

435. fluting a wild carol. It is an old tradition that the swan sings her sweetest song just before her death.

443. The King is gone. Layamon, in his *Vita Merlini*, has this account of the passing of Arthur: "And I myself (Arthur) will go to Avalon, to the most beauteous of women, to the queen Argante, an elf wondrous fair: and she will heal me of my wounds, and make me quite well with a healing drink. Afterwards I will come again to my kingdom and dwell among the Britons in great bliss. While he was saying this, a little boat came, borne by the waves. There were two women therein, of marvellous beauty. They took Arthur and laid him in the boat, and sailed away. Then was fulfilled what Merlin had said of yore, that there should be mighty grief at Arthur's forth-faring. And the Britons believe yet that he is alive, and dwells in Avalon with the fairest of elves; and the Britons still look for his coming again."